



This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

- + *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.
- + *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.
- + *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.
- + *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at <http://books.google.com/>



The
Rise of Egremont
A Novel

By
W. L. Elliot Seawell

EDITED BY C. M. REEVE

New York
Scribner's Sons

1901

Small
1920



CT 10 1902

es 15

Presented by


Dr. C. I. Chang

New York Public Library

Amell

NBS





The House of Egremont



THE NEW YORK
PUBLIC LIBRARY

ASTOR, LENOX AND
TILDEN FOUNDATIONS



ROGER WALKED AROUND THE OTHER SIDE OF THE BUSH . . . HAT IN HAND

The
House of Egremont
A Novel

By
Molly Elliot Seawell

ILLUSTRATED BY C. M. FELTEA

New York
Charles Scribner's Sons

1901



1

The

House of Egremont

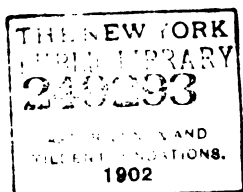
A Novel

By
Molly Elliot Seawell

ILLUSTRATED BY C. M. RELYEA

New York
Charles Scribner's Sons
1901

NEW YORK
PUBLIC
LIBRARY



Copyright, 1900
BY CHARLES SCRIBNER'S SONS

*Dramatic and all other rights
reserved*

ROY WOOD
GURIN
WATSON

UNIVERSITY PRESS • JOHN WILSON
AND SON • CAMBRIDGE, U. S. A.

Contents

CHAPTER	PAGE
I. IN WHICH ROGER EGREMONT MAKES HIS BOW TO THE WORLD	1
II. ROGER EGREMONT MAKES INTIMATE ACQUAINTANCE WITH TWO PERSONS, WHO EXERCISE GREAT BUT WIDELY DIFFERING INFLUENCES UPON HIS LIFE, — TO WIT, THE DEVIL AND MISS BESS LUKENS	25
III. ONCE MORE AT EGREMONT	49
IV. SHOWING HOW ROGER EGREMONT FALLS INTO GOOD COMPANY	62
V. THE EASTER TUESDAY MASQUERADE ON THE TERRACE, AND WHAT CAME OF IT	87
VI. "YOUR LOVER IS EVER IN A BAD WAY WHEN THE OTHER WOMAN APPEARS"	121
VII. IN WHICH ROGER EGREMONT MEETS WITH BOTH GOOD AND ILL FORTUNE	148
VIII. WHEREIN THE PRINCESS MICHELLE IS PUT IN THE WAY OF SECURING THE DESTINY OF WHICH SHE HAS LONG DREAMED	172
IX. "I WISH YOU TO COME WITH ME"	198
X. HO! FOR ORLAMUNDE	217
XI. THE JOURNEY, AND SOME CONFIDENCES MADE BY ROGER EGREMONT TO THE PRINCESS MICHELLE	235
XII. "YOU HAVE BROUGHT ME TO THE GATE OF PARADISE, AND HAVE SHOWN ME THE GLORY OF THE BEAUTY WITHIN — AND THEN HAVE THRUST ME AWAY!"	256

Contents

CHAPTER	PAGE
XIII. THE PALACE OF MONPLAISIR—THE ABODE OF THE MOST HIGH, MOST MIGHTY, AND MOST PUISSANT PRINCE OF ORLAMUNDE	280
XIV. ROGER EGREMONT HAS A LITTLE ADVENTURE IN A GARDEN AT NEERWINDEN AND BECOMES A MAJOR IN THE FINEST BRIGADE IN THE WORLD	301
XV. IN WHICH AN EGREMONT HAS THE HAPPINESS OF RETURNING TO HIS NATIVE LAND—AND WHAT BEFELL HIM THERE	328
XVI. ONCE MORE IN THE SALOON OF THE SWANS . .	352
XVII. IN WHICH CAPTAIN ROGER EGREMONT ACTS AS COACHMAN, AND LIEUTENANT-GENERAL THE DUKE OF BERWICK AS FOOTMAN	375
XVIII. ROGER EGREMONT HAS HIS LAST FIGHT WITH THE DEVIL	401
XIX. IF A MAN GIVETH HIS LIFE FOR HIS FRIENDS, HE CAN DO NO MORE	424
XX. "HUGO STEIN IS MY ENEMY, AND I AM HIS, AS LONG AS WE BOTH SHALL LIVE"	452
XXI. WHEREIN IS SET FORTH THE CONCLUSION OF A MAN WHO ALWAYS FEARED GOD, AND ALWAYS TOOK HIS OWN PART	479

ILLUSTRATIONS

	PAGE
ROGER WALKED AROUND THE OTHER SIDE OF THE BUSH	
. . . HAT IN HAND	<i>Frontispiece</i>
"HERE ARE PENS, INK, AND PAPER"	40
THEN, WALKING DOWN THE STAIRWAY, CAME THE POOR	
KING	218
THEY WAIT TO BID THE PRINCESS GOOD-NIGHT	296
DICKY WHISTLED TO BOLD, WHO CAME AND LICKED HIS	
HAND	334
ROGER RAISED THE PISTOL AND FIRED	400



THE HOUSE OF EGREMONT

CHAPTER I

IN WHICH ROGER EGREMONT MAKES HIS BOW TO
THE WORLD

THE fortunes of the House of Egremont had their first great bloom through the agency of a platter of beans; and through a platter of beans more than a hundred years later the elder branch was ousted from one of the greatest estates in England, became wanderers and gentlemen adventurers throughout Europe, fought in quarrels not their own, served sovereigns of foreign countries, knew the dazzling heights of glory, and fell into the mire of penury and disrepute. An Egremont had the ear of kings, and another Egremont mounted the gallows. They mated sometimes with princes and dukes, and sometimes they were thought fit to mate with the daughters of their gaolers. Some of them were great at play, and met and vanquished the best players of Europe on the field of the cloth of green; other Egremonts were ascetics and wore hair shirts next their skins, and fasted and prayed extremely. They seemed the favorite playthings of destiny, which had a showman's way of exhibiting them in all the ups and downs, the glories and shames, of human vicissitudes.

The House of Egremont

The first trick she played them was to their advantage. John Egremont, a handsome, red-blooded country squire, of infinite assurance, happened to catch the eye of Queen Elizabeth when she was befooling the world with the notion that she, at the age of forty, would marry the boy Duke of Anjou, twenty years younger than herself. Part of this play was that the Queen should pine and lose her appetite, and swear wildly one day that she would never marry a man who might "flout the old woman," and then proceed to write the Duke a love-letter which would shame a dairy-maid. The Duke, having tired of the whole business, took ship for France, while the Queen took to her bed at her palace of Westminster and moaned and wept incessantly. Nothing would she eat. John Egremont, being in the Queen's anteroom when one of her maids came out lamenting that the Queen could eat nothing, ran down into the kitchen, snatched up a platter of beans, the first thing on which he could lay hands, and was about to run away with it. The cooks, however, were valiant men though humble, and they fell upon him with basting ladles and rolling-pins and turnspits, so that John Egremont had to draw his sword. This he did, slashing out right and left, and pinking more than one of them; but nevertheless, carrying his beans high above his head, he escaped from the *mêlée*, and flew back to the Queen's apartments. Pushing his way into her presence, — a thing easily forgiven by her when the man was young and comely, — he presented the beans on his knees to her. The Queen, lying wrapped in a great mantle, with her face in her hands, was persuaded to turn and look at the kneeling Egremont. Something flashed from her cold bright eyes into his cold bright eyes, and the daughter of Henry the Eighth suddenly

Roger Egremont Makes His Bow

burst into that loud, ringing Tudor laugh, which was like the shout of a clarion. Whether it was the homeliness of the dish, or the expression of knowingness in Egremont's handsome eyes, or that she was tired of the play, is all one. She ate the beans, — Egremont meanwhile telling her in moving language of his fight with the cooks, and showing her his mantle, which bore the marks of the greasy encounter. At this, Elizabeth Tudor laughed louder than ever; and when Egremont kissed her beautiful white hands, after she had washed them in a silver basin, she fingered fondly the short curls upon his neck, as she was wont to do with handsome young fellows. From that day to the time, six months before her death, when she fingered weakly the curls on the neck of Egremont's son — a handsome young man — as she had fingered his father's, and laughed feebly the old Tudor laugh, she was the sturdy friend of the Egremonts. It mattered little that they were staunch believers in the old religion, and that the Egremont dames had mass daily in a secret chapel, and at their chief estate of Egremont was a "priest's hole," where the priest was hidden when persecution raged. Elizabeth Tudor was the only one of her race who was not consumed with a rage for religion; but she, being a perfectly good-natured sceptic, merely laughed in her sleeve at those who risked their persons and estates for conscience' sake. True, the queer Elizabethan religion afforded a very good club wherewith to pound those subjects, otherwise distasteful or insubordinate to her Majesty, but men as comely, well-born, and debonair as John Egremont were at liberty to believe what they liked, as long as they came to court, flattered the Queen, and made her great presents. So she continued to *give profitable places* to the Egremonts,

The House of Egremont

swearing flatly to her lords in council her great, mouth-filling oath, "By God's Son!" that Egremont, to her certain knowledge, had conformed to the last new statutes, and to the very last days of her life remained a good friend and protector to that family.

The Egremonts seemed to be gifted with the art of pleasing kings. They were as much in favor with James the First as they had been with the mighty princess whose mantle fitted Scotch James as well as royal robes fit a sign-post. He played the fool with them as he did with all his favorites, but put money in their purses for it, and their estates grew. Poor stubborn Charles the First found the Egremonts loyal to him in his endeavors to rule the English people as they did not wish to be ruled; and, although they suffered somewhat at the hands of Cromwell, the second Charles found them to his heart's liking, and repaid them twice over.

There were many Egremonts then, younger sons of younger sons, and they held together strongly in certain things, and differed angrily and loudly upon others. They were not a race of milksops, but sinewy men and women, red-blooded like their Elizabethan ancestor. Their motto was, "Fear God, and take your own part." Some of them feared God, but all of them took their own part with firmness and determination. Although they held firmly to their religion, they frequently took liberties with the Decalogue; but having received great benefits from their sovereigns, repaid it with a handsome loyalty.

The head of the house in the merry days of Charles the Second was a certain John Egremont, comely and debonair, like his forbears, but cold of heart and a calculator. Like most men of that type, his loves were *few and strange*. He footed it at court with the best

Roger Egremont Makes His Bow

of them, was good at playing and at fighting, and thought with King Charles that God would not forever damn a man for taking a little pleasure out of the way. He was rather proud of his reputation as a sad dog, and it was in no way impaired during a brief married life. The yoke was light, and was soon lifted by death; so, within a year or two John Egremont was back at court, leaving a little motherless boy at Egremont. Then he took a notion to make the grand tour, — a quarrel with Lady Castlemaine rendering it very necessary that he should absent himself from England for a time. It was three years before he returned, but my Lady Castlemaine had not cooled off, nor did she during the remainder of John Egremont's life.

The next seven years were spent by him in backstairs negotiations to get back to court, and in long absences on the Continent; and meanwhile his son and heir, the little Roger, led at Egremont the most neglected life possible, so far as his father was concerned. He had, it is true, a tutor, a guzzling, tipsy creature, whom the boy despised and hated, and from whom he would learn nothing. The tutor, however, secure in the indifference of the lad's father, troubled himself not at all about Roger's learning, or want of learning; and so the boy grew up as ignorant as a clod concerning books, but not so ignorant about some other important things. John Egremont's absences from England, and his stony nature, left him but few friends, even among his own kindred, thus breaking the traditions of his family. The little Roger, therefore, was reared in loneliness, except for the companionship of one other lad, a far-off cousin, Dicky Egremont. Dicky was almost as ill off for friends as Roger, his nearest relative being a paralytic old grandfather, who had

The House of Egremont

served under Prince Rupert, and eked out an existence in what was little more than a cottage on the Egremont estate. The two boys were perpetually together, and had no other company but servants. Roger could not be called a handsome lad, although he had ever a straight, slender figure, fine white teeth in his wide mouth, and a profusion of beautifully curling light-brown hair. But Dicky was rather a homely little boy, in spite of his apple cheeks and his dimples and a very roguish smile; and although only two years younger than Roger, he always seemed very much more so, and Roger early acquired the habit of speaking to him and of him as if Dicky were an infant, and he, Roger, were an hundred years old. This was so marked that Roger, at eleven years of age, thought the nine-year-old Dicky too young to share many of his thoughts and dreams, — for he thought and dreamed, although he did not read and could scarcely write his name.

But, though a very ignorant boy, he was so far from uncouth and witless that his ignorance was anything but obvious. He had by nature a strong and acute understanding, and showed even as a little lad great art in concealing the defects of his education. He had, moreover, a natural grace, a careless sweetness in his air that made him the pet of the ladies in the drawing-room on the rare occasions when he saw them, as well as the favorite of Hoggins the cook, and Molly the housemaid. And though most of his days were passed with game-keepers and stablemen, and his evenings generally in the housekeeper's room, Roger never forgot, or allowed these people to forget, that he knew the difference between the condition of gentle and simple. Indeed, the servants, out of pity for his forlorn childhood, had tried to console him by telling him that all

Roger Egremont Makes His Bow

the broad lands of Egremont and the stately Elizabethan house would one day be his. It sank deep in the boy's mind, and he early acquired an idea of the beauty and value of his home and a passionate affection for it, that strongly colored all his later life. And Egremont was worthy to be loved. The manor-house lay upon a breezy upland, with the faint blue line of the hill country between it and the salt sea on the one side; and on the other, afar off, was the salt sea again, each but little more than a day's ride away. The land was rich and well wooded and watered. A little brawling river ran through the estate, and fed the artificial lake and fish pond near the house, on which swans and ducks floated and made their reedy habitations. The woods of Egremont were celebrated, and particularly a great avenue of oaks, three miles long, standing in ranks like soldiers at parade, was the envy of all the timber merchants in the south of England. John Egremont, in the year of the Restoration, planted two thousand young oaks; the timber, already immensely valuable, was likely to become more so.

The park held a thousand acres, through which the dun deer ran, and where other wild creatures and many birds found undisturbed cover. It was in this park that Roger Egremont spent his boyhood and early manhood. The house, a vast parallelogram, had been built by that John Egremont of the bean-platter. It was full of tall windows; the Elizabethan architects, being new to glass, used it so lavishly that many Elizabethan mansions were little more than glass houses. There was a fine hall in the Egremont house, and a library with a respectable number of books in it, and much quaint carved woodwork, but the lad, Roger Egremont, was almost a stranger in the house, so little

The House of Egremont

did he live in it, except to sleep in a little bedroom he had on the first floor, and to take his meals in a grimy den habited by the tutor. For at the break of day, every morning, fair or foul, Roger was out of doors, looking after his rabbit hutches and all his various contrivances for trapping wild creatures, and running about the stables backing the colts, cultivating the acquaintance of the great, mild-eyed cows, as they stood in line to be milked, listening to the call of birds and domestic fowls, and learning to imitate them, watching the budding or the falling of the leaf, feeding the ducks in the river, and gravely studying by the hour the antics of the fish in the fish pond. In short, the great book of nature lay open before him, and he read it diligently, and learned to understand it well, but of other books and of men he knew pitifully little.

In these hours of incessant bodily and actually mental activity, little Dicky was generally his companion, and it pleased the older boy's vanity to tell him the magnificent things to be done for him when Roger should reign at Egremont. Yet, when the servants talked before him, as they often did, of "when master be dead," — an event which they rather anticipated, — Roger would fly into a rage and cry, —

"Say no more to me of that. Do you think I want my father to die?"

To this, Molly the housemaid pertly replied, —

"La, Master Roger, he be dead enough a'ready to all of us."

Roger's feelings toward his father were strangely contradictory. The boy had a tender and loving heart, and it warmed at the name of father. He admired his father's portrait, taken in a splendid court dress, with long, dark locks flowing on his shoulders. And on the

Roger Egremont Makes His Bow

few and short visits of John Egremont at his home, the lad always ran to meet him with delight. But he was always received coldly and carelessly, and he always had, in consequence, a revulsion of feeling, very much like hatred. For his mother's memory the boy had a fond affection, and loved to hear the story of her short life under the roof of Egremont.

So life went on until Roger was twelve years old, when one day he got a letter from his father,—the first in his life. He could not read it alone, and he would not take it to his tutor, so he went after little Dicky, who was an expert at reading and writing. And the news which Dicky read to him, sitting on the bench by the fish pond, was that John Egremont was coming home to live, and would bring with him a younger son, Hugo, the child of a second marriage made in Germany; and the father hoped the two brothers would be good friends.

The two lads gazed into each other's eyes with consternation,—staggered and alarmed at the notion of the new boy. Roger, however, had a good courage, and spoke up sturdily.

“At least, I am the oldest and the biggest; and if he will not behave, I can trounce him, that I will.”

Some time after, one morning as Roger was returning to the house for breakfast after a gallop on his pony since daybreak, he was seized at the buttery door by Molly the housemaid, who burst out,—

“Your dad's come, Master Roger, and another boy with him, as master told the housekeeper was two year younger nor you. It's your new brother—ha! ha!”

Molly's laughter was anything but merry, and her news made Roger an unresisting victim in her hands, while she scrubbed his face and hands violently, curled

The House of Egremont

his long light hair, and whisked him into his best suit, she clacking angrily meanwhile about "lads as was said to be ten, and any fool could see warn't a day under fourteen."

And then Roger, very white and very straight, walked to the hall where his father and his newly arrived brother awaited him.

Some premonition of evil flashed into the boy's young soul as he stood for five minutes outside the door, before he could screw his courage up to opening it, and he was not a boy of faint heart either. At the end of the hall, by the fireplace, sat his father and a strange boy. Roger advanced, still pale, but graceful and outwardly at ease. As he approached, his father rose, and said in the kindest tone that Roger had ever heard from his lips,—

"Roger, this is your younger brother, Hugo; I hope you will be good friends."

To have an unknown brother sprung on one would have disconcerted an older and wiser person than poor little Roger Egremont. He became still whiter as his dark eyes grew larger and darker, and he glanced uneasily from his father to the new brother, without making any advance at all. Hugo, a tall, well-grown boy, was the image of his father, and Roger made the alarming discovery that Hugo was much bigger than he, and instead of his licking Hugo, Hugo would be quite able to lick him. The two lads looked at each other for a moment, and then Hugo, slipping off his chair, ran forward and kissed his half-brother on both cheeks, French fashion.

To be kissed at all was disconcerting to Roger, and to be kissed by another boy was an insult and a humiliation. Roger's reception, therefore, of these endearments *was a vigorous push.*

Roger Egremont Makes His Bow

"I'll shake hands if you like," he said sulkily, "but I'll have no kissing."

John Egremont, secretly enraged, could not but remember that any English boy would resent such an advance. He said, therefore, without any exhibition of wrath: "Your brother has been brought up abroad, and does not know English manners, although he speaks English. But you two should have fine times together. Hugo will live here after this."

The two boys eyed each other distrustfully. It vexed their father to see how much taller and bigger was Hugo, the alleged younger, than Roger. Hugo was a handsomer boy, but Roger had more the air of a gentleman.

They shook hands, nevertheless, and Hugo, making a pirouette, said something in French and something in German to his father, quite as if they were equals; and John Egremont laughed, while Hugo burst into the fragment of a song about *Ce monstre là* which seemed to tickle his father mightily.

All this time a thousand maddening questions were chasing each other through Roger's disturbed mind. Had he a stepmother, and any more brothers and sisters? He had an immediate opportunity of finding this out, for their father at once dismissed them, thinking they would the more speedily become friends alone.

Once outside, upon the terrace that led down to the fish pond, Roger turned to Hugo, and asked, —

"Where is your mother?"

"In Germany," replied Hugo, with much readiness; and then, stopping still with a frightened look, he caught Roger by the arm and cried, —

"Oh, no, no! — they told me to say she was dead, and I forgot. *Don't tell my father, please.*"

The House of Egremont

"I am no telltale," replied Roger, with ready contempt; "somebody told you to tell a lie and you told the truth."

Hugo was not pleased at the frankness of this speech, but he had been warned by his father concerning the code of morals and manners he was likely to meet with among English boys, and privately concluded they were all a pack of brutes.

Nevertheless, the boys made some efforts at a good understanding, in which they were mutually helped by little Dicky, who presently turned up. Dicky loved Roger better than anything in the world, and was secretly cut to the heart by Roger's inferiority in certain things to Hugo, which soon became apparent. For Hugo was a miracle of boyish accomplishments. He could chatter both French and German, could sing in three languages and dance in four, could play the viol da gamba, and draw, and knew the sword exercise perfectly on foot. He could not, however, do it on horseback, and was quite unlearned about horses, dogs, and fowling-pieces. Here, Roger excelled; and Dicky suggested timidly to him that he should learn some things of Hugo, and in return teach Hugo to ride. This sensible advice both boys took, and got on the better for it. Yet never were two creatures more dissimilar. Roger fought when he was angry, Hugo quarrelled: in that lay enormous differences.

Soon, however, they were thrown so completely upon each other for companionship that perforce they were compelled to become playmates, or have no playmates at all. For to John Egremont's infinite rage and disgust, Hugo was coldly looked upon by all the Egremont kindred, and by the gentry round about Egremont. A tale was industriously circulated that this lad's mother,

Roger Egremont Makes His Bow

certain Madame Stein, had neither married John Egremont nor died, but was still flourishing in Germany. As for Hugo's being younger than Roger, his appearance flatly contradicted his father's assertions, and the story which John Egremont had concocted with infinite pains found no believers. The Egremonts were angered by the giving of their name to the boy. The gentry would not let their sons associate with Hugo; and, as Hugo was the one object dear to John Egremont's hard heart, he bitterly resented the attitude of his world toward his favorite child. And as it refused to accept this favorite child, John Egremont decided that it should not accept his other son; so Roger was forbidden to go where Hugo was not invited. As Hugo was never invited anywhere, the two boys stayed very closely at home. John Egremont was kinder to Roger than he had ever been before, because, looking into the future, he saw that Hugo might profit some day by his brother's good-will. But there was no disguising the blind partiality of the father for the boy who was like him. Hugo was upon terms of familiarity with his father that were simply amazing in that age of extreme filial respect and obedience. Roger never dared the smallest liberty. It made his boyish heart well with anguish when he heard his father gravely discussing with Hugo, as if Hugo were the heir and a man grown, certain alterations he wished to make in the house and various improvements on the estate. By way of revenge, when the two boys were alone, Roger would not fail to remind Hugo which one was the heir, and, instead of begging him not to tell their father, menaced him; and as Roger was a fighter, Hugo very prudently held his tongue.

The ill-will of my Lady Castlemaine was not over in

The House of Egremont

a day, and year after year, as John Egremont showed his face at Whitehall Palace, he was civilly invited to take himself off. This lasted until Roger was sixteen years old and Hugo was alleged to be fourteen, when a very unexpected summons into the other world came to John Egremont, and he was forced to mount and go behind the gentleman on a pale horse. He had not even time to sign a will he had made, in which he gave all he could of the estate, and much that was not his to give, to Hugo. This darling of his father's heart was left penniless. Sir Thomas Buckstone, a money-getting, puritanical person, was named as guardian of the two lads in this unsigned will, and nobody objecting, he qualified, and immediately took charge of them.

Now, as none of John Egremont's friends and neighbors had believed his story concerning Hugo, when the boy was by this mischance left a beggar a great outcry was raised against him. This was intensified by letters received from the lad's mother, who came to life most unopportunately, and followed her letters to England. She was a painted, shrill-voiced, handsome harpy of a woman, whose wild protestations and vehement assertions and multitude and variety of asseverations that she was John Egremont's widow, did away with the small chance Hugo had of getting a younger brother's portion; and she retired defeated and discredited from the beginning.

Sir Thomas Buckstone, a dull-witted man, saw only in Roger Egremont a graceful, shy, uneducated strippling, who knew nothing but horses and dogs, and conceived it would be for their mutual advantage that there should be but one mind between them, and that mind Sir Thomas's. And there were, besides, eight *Buckstone maidens*, any one of whom was eligible to

Roger Egremont Makes His Bow

become Madam Egremont. Therefore Sir Thomas solemnly assured Roger of the intention to protect him from being robbed in favor of Hugo.

"A very small allowance, my dear lad — enough to keep him from beggary; that is all which I can in conscience allow him out of your estate."

Roger heard this in silence for a moment and then said, —

"But he is my father's son. He should have enough to live upon as becomes a gentleman."

"One hundred pounds a year," replied Sir Thomas, virtuously.

"Make it what you like, sir; but although I am not great friends with my half-brother, I would not stint him in his living. If I cannot give him enough out of my own allowance, I can promise him to give him a sum down when I am of age, and I shall do it."

Which he did; and of which Hugo was perfectly sure as soon as Roger told him, and straightway borrowed money on the strength of it. But he borrowed prudently,—Hugo being ever prudent. The two brothers continued to live at Egremont, and were more nearly friends than they had ever been before. Hugo read and studied diligently, and Roger never looked into a book. Sir Thomas Buckstone, thinking money on education wasted, made no move toward supplying his ward with book-learning, and Roger's religion debarred him from the universities; so he lived on, the same lazy, happy, idle, and apparently unprofitable life he had always led. He was not the soberest young man in the parish, and did not follow Hugo's example of always watering his wine; by which as others grew drunk, Hugo remained sober and smiling. Nor was Roger immaculate in other respects, but where Hugo had one friend, Roger had a dozen.

The House of Egremont

It is not to be supposed that Roger gave no thought to the future mistress of Egremont, but beyond plainly indicating it was *not* to be one of the eight Buckstone maidens, he made no sign. He was a favorite in the hunting-field, where he was a bold and dashing rider, and at balls, where he danced well, and he could sing a good song, accompanying himself upon the viol, — an accomplishment he had picked up from Hugo. Nor was he at all shy with the ladies, and knew quite well how to turn a compliment with perfect grace. But he was so sensible of his deficiencies in education, and knew so little to talk about, that he did not very much cultivate the society of women. Nevertheless, Roger Egremont was fully able to reach the standard of a man as defined by Henry the Great of France, in his song descriptive of himself, —

“ This devil of a Henry the Fourth,
Has the three gifts that make a man.
He can drink, he can fight,
And he can be gallant to the ladies.”

Hugo, on the contrary, cultivated assiduously all who would notice him. What mattered it that the sheriff of the county invited Roger, before Hugo's face, to dine at his house, and pointedly omitted Hugo? Hugo smiling met him next day, and asked cordially after her ladyship and her ladyship's daughters, and rode by his lordship's side for the space of a mile or more. What if there were talk about whether he should be permitted to attend the county ball? Hugo worked for an invitation hard, and went upon a very slim one, and bore amiably the cold looks of the people generally who were assembled. He was far more regularly handsome than *Roger*, infinitely accomplished, and made considerable


Roger Egremont Makes His Bow

headway with the other sex. Roger despised his half-brother for this way of getting on in the world, but he was at a loss how to explain his feelings in the matter.

By that time, Dicky Egremont was growing manward. He was as eager about learning as Roger was indifferent, and was likewise a great toast among the ladies, a tireless dancer, an expert fiddler, and had a voice in singing like the sweetest thrush that ever sang. His old grandfather being dead, and having no estate, Dicky, like his cousins, had liberty to follow his natural bent, and it led him wherever there was youth, gayety, and music. Roger, who could well afford it, made him a handsome allowance, of which Dicky made ducks and drakes. Much of it went on horses and dogs, but stray fiddlers, professional beggars, and occasionally the deserving poor got the best part of it. Unlike Roger, Dicky sorrowfully lamented that he was shut out, by the religion of his family, from a liberal education, and sometimes talked wildly of running away to St. Omer's or Douai, or Clermont, where he could learn what was out of his reach at Oxford and Cambridge. But as these aspirations were usually followed by a screeching run after the hounds, or a roaring night at cards and dice, nobody took little Dicky very seriously. One March morning, however, after a convivial night of it, beginning with the county ball and ending in countless jorums of punch, Roger, on rising and going out, found Dicky with a solemn face, round and rosy though it might be, walking up and down the terrace.

"Halloa!" cried Roger, gayly, "I did not think to find thee sober this morning. The last I remember was the chorus we were having —"

"Roger," said Dicky, going up to his cousin, and holding him by the lappel as he had done as a little lad.



The House of Egremont

"This life is idle and sinful. I am going to France to be educated — to St. Omer's; I am going, I tell you."

Roger's ringing laugh startled the lazy fish in the fish pond.

"*You* going to St. Omer's — such a promising little rake as you are?"

Dicky blushed scarlet, and then fell to smiling so that the dimples came out all over his round, rosy face. "I know," he said presently, becoming preposterously grave, and blinking his eyes solemnly, "I have been a very wild, bad fellow, but I mean to reform — that I do, Cousin Roger."

"Do, little Dicky," cried Roger, beginning to laugh again, and throwing his arm around Dicky's neck. "You 'll have to give over punch —"

"I had too much last night, God forgive me," piously said Dicky, and then, Hugo suddenly appearing, Dicky stopped short, and the three young men went in to breakfast. Roger did not take Dicky any too seriously. He remembered that Dicky, as a boy, frequently announced his intention to be a priest, chiefly for the pleasure of hiding himself in the "priest's hole" that mysterious place behind the mantel in the little yellow parlor, out of which Roger, as executioner, would haul him and proceed to decapitate him on the stone horse-block outside. And Dicky was very young, and extravagantly fond of fiddling and dancing; so Roger thought no more about the scheme until one day, about a week after that, when a letter was put in his hand. It was in Dicky's handwriting, and ran thus: —

DEAR ROGER, — Do not be angry; I am on my way as fast as a good horse will carry me, to Torbay, where I shall take ship for France. Pray, Cousin Roger, do not be very angry. I have some money, and I have no one in the world to love

Roger Egremont Makes His Bow

or think of except you; and I want to have some college learning, and that is why I have gone. Dear Roger, you have been the best and truest friend I ever had, except my grandfather. You need not look for my fiddle. I could not take it with me, so I hid it in a place where some day I shall come after it. God bless you, Roger.

Your aff. cousin,

RICHD. EGREMONT.

Roger was, indeed, very angry with Dicky. He went to the yellow parlor, and drawing back a panel of the wainscoting, revealed the well-known place in the wall, — pierced with auger-holes for air and light, — and there lay Dicky's beloved fiddle; and in the midst of Roger's wrath the sight made him smile.

Egremont was lonely to Roger for a long while after Dicky's departure, for although he and Hugo were upon perfectly friendly terms, there was little sympathy between them. And troublous times were ahead for all Englishmen, for it was then the summer of 1688. England seethed like a pot over the repeal of the Test Act, and the substitution of the Act of Toleration. Naturally, Roger Egremont was strongly predisposed toward the abolition of the Test Act, which, as long as it lasted, excluded him not only from the universities and the learned professions, for which he cared nothing, but from the profession of arms, for which he cared a great deal. Few, even of the strongest advocates of King James, went as far as Roger Egremont in his views. Reasoning naturally, his ideas were lofty, but often impractical. He dared assert that it was inherently wrong to molest any man, in his person or estate, for his religious belief. This was but a step removed from treason, according to the lights of his time, when, everywhere, a difference in religion was considered a crime against the

The House of Egremont

State. This and many other ideas, which Robert Egremont was accused of getting from game-keepers and poachers, he really drew from the thoughts that flooded his mind when he saw the pale glory of the stars gleaming in the serene sky of evening, or felt the vagrant wind blowing, or watched the awakening of the spring, or the solemn farewell that nature takes in the dying time of year.

These notions mattered little as long as Roger was a minor, living idly and pleasantly at Egremont. But when he came of age, and openly advocated the cause of dissenters and papists, it was altogether different. The Egremont estates gave him great political interest, and he made no secret of the way he meant to use it, — in treasonable practices, so his world thought, but really in the advancement of human liberty.

Meanwhile things were going badly for another advocate of the Act of Toleration — to wit, his Majesty, James the Second. It grew toward the autumn of the year 1688, and England was filled with rumors of revolution, while the gaols were filled with dissenters, and the Catholics shivered at the prospect of soon joining them. At Exeter, not far from Egremont, a number of dissenting ministers had been imprisoned, and typhus fever broke out among them. One of them had preached in the parish of Egremont, and great complaint had been made of Roger Egremont's indifference to the maintenance of the law concerning dissenters. Some of the followers of these poor men had visited these unfortunates in gaol and brought away the infection of fever, which raged thereafter in the country round about. When the trial came off, a few weeks later, one of the judges and several of the jury and of the spectators caught the *fever from the prisoners*, and many deaths resulted.

Roger Egremont Makes His Bow

Roger Egremont and his half-brother were speaking of this one November afternoon in 1688, as they sat at dinner in the great dining-hall at Egremont. The main entrance opened directly into this vast hall, hung with portraits, with ancient armor, and with hunting trophies. A fine musicians' gallery faced a huge fireplace in which a coach and four could have turned around. Innumerable tall slits of windows let in the light, and faintly illuminated the carved ceiling almost lost in the gloom of the dull autumn afternoon.

The pretence, so carefully cultivated by their father, that Roger was the elder had become more obvious as the young men grew older. Hugo, tall, dark, and well made, was at least twenty-three years old, and everybody but himself laughed when he gravely spoke of himself as barely twenty. Hugo always uttered it with the utmost seriousness. Roger had never been so regularly handsome as Hugo, but he retained the charming, arch expression of his boyish days in his dark eyes, and his was one of those faces on which both women and men look with favor.

The two brothers were seated at a small square table, close by the fireplace. They talked together of the parliamentary struggles, and of the chances of the King's party. The conflict between James the Second and William of Orange was on, and every day news was expected of the landing of the Dutch Prince.

"For my part," said Roger, very earnestly, "I look in amazement at this England of ours. The people prate of liberty, and yet are panic-stricken at the mere notion that a man should have liberty of conscience to worship God as he likes. I am for the repeal of the Test Act, and the penal laws, and in favor of the Act of Toleration, not simply because it will make me a

The House of Egremont

free man, but because it will mean the breaking of the dawn to many who have stumbled along in the darkness, thinking the figures of their fellow-men huge, misshapen devils menacing them. And if all Englishmen were equally free, we would see each other as we are and have no fear."

"What book did you get that fine speech out of, brother?" asked Hugo, smiling indulgently, as he always did, at the views of the unlettered Roger. A dull flush came into Roger's face.

"Surely, I did not get it out of any book; it is a thought out of my own head. Books are well enough, but I can learn nothing from them — true, I have not much tried," he added hastily. "But I know that to keep me, a free-born Briton, subject to imprisonment and infamy, and to take my lands away from me, if I openly practise the religion of our fathers, is wrong. And to forbid me, an English gentleman, to walk in St. James's Park, whither every Dutch spy can have access, is a gross affront to me, — nay more, an invasion of my liberty. And I also know that to keep those unfortunate poor creatures languishing in gaol at Exeter, because they go to hear a weaver preach in a barn of Sundays, is inhuman. And I would like to see my country be the first, and not the last, to see this great truth of toleration."

Hugo, who was not fond of these discussions, remarked: "In my ride to-day, I heard that two of the nonconformist ministers in gaol at Exeter are dead of the gaol fever, and that fourteen persons, including the judge that sentenced them, are ill, and several likely to die. There should be precautions taken in bringing prisoners with the infection on them into court."

"If the judge that sentenced them and the jury that

Roger Egremont Makes His Bow

convicted them all died of the fever, it would be the just reward of iniquity," cried Roger, excitedly. "I need no book learning for that!"

As he raised his eyes he saw, through the window opposite, a number of armed men who seemed to have sprung from the ground, and who fairly surrounded the house as far as he could see. And at the same moment the great door of the hall was opened, and a long-nosed gentleman, in military dress and a black peruke, entered, followed by three other persons, evidently of the suite of the long-nosed gentleman. They advanced without bowing; one of the party ran ahead, pulled out a chair, and the long-nosed gentleman seated himself at the table without removing his hat.

Roger Egremont watched this silently and without rising. Nor did he move when the long-nosed gentleman, coolly helping himself to a piece of a fowl on the table, said in English with a Dutch accent: "Sir, I am under no disguise. I am the Prince of Orange. My horse lost a shoe at your park gates, and knowing it to be near dinner-time, I claim your hospitality until the blacksmith is through with the horse."

As soon as he uttered the words "I am the Prince of Orange," Hugo rose and made obeisance. Roger, quietly picking up his hat, which lay on a chair nearby, put it on his head; he and the Prince of Orange were the only persons covered.

The Prince, without noticing the action, continued to gnaw and tug at his chicken, while Roger continued to observe in silence his four uninvited guests. Two of the Dutchmen helped themselves to mutton from the dish, while the third gulped down wine, and making a wry face after it, spat upon the floor.

Roger Egremont's black eyes began to blaze. The

The House of Egremont

Prince of Orange, with the drumstick of the chicken sticking out of his mouth, spoke in a tone of explanation rather than apology.

"The wine drunk in England does not suit Dutch palates. Have you no other liquor?"

"I have a variety of liquor," responded Roger, with the greatest politeness, "but none of it will suit Dutch palates. It was bought by English gentlemen for English gentlemen, of whom I am one, by God!"

The Prince of Orange glanced up at Roger, who wore a cool, insulting smile. The Prince's saturnine features contorted into a smile too, as, drawing his sword, he leaned over the table, and catching Roger's hat on the sword's point, flicked it off. A platter of the same kind of white beans with which Roger Egremont's ancestor won the favor of Elizabeth Tudor was at hand. Roger took it up gently, poised it carefully, and then threw it full in the face of the Prince of Orange.

That day, six months, Roger Egremont appeared in the prisoner's dock at Westminster Hall, before the Court of the King's Bench, to be tried for his life upon the charge of sedition and treason. He sat, because the fetters upon his legs prevented him from standing.

CHAPTER II

ROGER EGREMONT MAKES INTIMATE ACQUAINTANCE
WITH TWO PERSONS, WHO EXERCISE GREAT BUT
WIDELY DIFFERING INFLUENCES UPON HIS LIFE,—
TO WIT, THE DEVIL AND MISS BESS LUKENS.

THE trial of Roger Egremont took place before a full bench, Chief Justice Holt presiding, and was among the first trials for sedition and treason resulting from the Revolution. It was memorable in another way; for from that day ceased the dreadful practice of trying prisoners in their chains. The Chief Justice, hearing a clanking when the prisoner rose to plead, said, —

“I should like to know why the prisoner is brought in ironed. If fetters were necessary for his safe custody before, there is no danger of escape or rescue here. Let them be instantly knocked off. When prisoners are tried, they should stand at their ease.”

“I thank your lordship,” replied Roger, rising with difficulty, and bowing.

When he was free from his chains and stood up, he was seen to be a young man of presence most fair, and of a cool courage.

The trial attracted a great concourse of people, and much violence of feeling was shown both for and against the prisoner. The Whigs, resenting far more than William of Orange the personal insult offered him, clamored for Roger Egremont's blood; and truly, if any

The House of Egremont

man in England deserved to be hanged for the share he took against the Dutch Prince, Roger Egremont was the man. He had endeavored to raise the county against the new-comer, and had actually succeeded in getting together a band, chiefly of his own kindred and tenantry, which pursued the Prince of Orange secretly almost to London, and were only prevented from waylaying him by the rapidity and secrecy with which he travelled. The whole Egremont connection stood firmly by King James; several of their number had followed him to St. Germain's, and were openly in communication with their kinsmen in England; and Roger Egremont had publicly and frequently denounced William of Orange in a manner impossible for any government to overlook which expected to stand. On the other hand, there were a vast number of Englishmen who thought as Roger Egremont did, and expressed themselves privately as he had done publicly. Sympathy for his youth, for the gross invasion of his house, for the spirit he showed as an English gentleman impatient of the rule of foreigners, made him many friends. It was felt that the new government had a hard nut to crack in handling him so that justice would not appear cruelty, and mercy weakness.

The Chief Justice and his associates dealt with him kindly, nor was the Attorney General unduly severe. But the evidence against him was enough to hang ten men. Among the first witnesses put in the box was his half-brother, Hugo Egremont, as he was still called, in spite of the fact that no soul in England, not excepting Hugo himself, believed his mother to have been at any time the wife of John Egremont.

Hugo had not wasted the first six months in which *William of Orange* was on the English throne. Having

Roger Makes Acquaintance, etc.

concluded that King James was gone, never to return, Hugo acted accordingly. He frequented the court, and was one among the English gentlemen who stood against the wall while William and his Dutch companions sat at their ease, and ate and drank and smoked, and talked in the Dutch language concerning the English people, their conduct and affairs, and laughed loudly at things which these attendant English gentlemen heard but could not understand. Hugo Egremont, however, being a very crafty young man, learned the Dutch language, to the mingled delight and chagrin of the Dutchmen, and conversed with them affably in their own tongue. He conformed so absolutely, and went to church so often, that even William of Orange grinned a sardonic grin when he heard of it, and my Lord Halifax, the prince of trimmers, laughed outright, and made it an after-dinner joke.

At the trial, Hugo's appearance — handsome, well dressed, sly, composed, and polished — gave rise to a groan from the spectators in the great hall. He went up to Roger and offered his hand, saying smoothly, —

“I am sorry, brother, to see you in this case.”

Roger, disdaining his hand, replied, —

“Call me not brother. Had you been loyal to your King, as all true Egremonts are, I would have forgotten that you are the child of my father's leman. But you chose the other part, so go your way from me, Hugo Stein.” This imprudent speech was heard by many persons. Hugo winced under it, but when he came to be examined, he showed no animus against Roger, and seemed to testify unwillingly. Yet, on his evidence alone, Roger could have been hanged twice over. When he was questioned in regard to Roger Egremont's designs in his pursuit of the Prince of Orange,

The House of Egremont

he hesitated and seemed distressed. Roger, however, replied for him, addressing the judges in the following cool and daring words, —

“My lords, of your goodness permit me to say, 'tis useless to probe this man, Hugo Stein, sometime known as Hugo Egremont. My motive in pursuing His Highness was to capture him and send him out of the kingdom; and though I did not expressly seek His Highness's life, yet had he been killed I should have felt no more regret than if I had killed a robber, coming by night to seize my goods.”

The Chief Justice at that moment was taken with a sharp coughing spell, as if he had not heard the prisoner's rash words, and leaning forward flashed Roger a look of distinct warning. But it was of no avail — the mischief had been done. It was commonly thought that Roger had given away his life in those words, and something like a sob went around in the great assemblage. Nevertheless, when sentence came to be pronounced, he was only sentenced to the forfeiture of his estate, and imprisonment in Newgate during his Majesty's pleasure.

It was night — a soft May night, following the day of his conviction — when Roger entered Newgate prison. Hitherto he had borne up manfully, and jested and laughed with his gaolers. But at the moment of passing under the dark and dreadful archway a panic seized his soul. Fear was new to him, and he was more frightened at being afraid than at anything else whatever. As he, with Lukens, the turnkey, to whom he had been handed over, passed along one of the great corridors, they heard a great shout of laughter and crying out, and clatter of drinking, and presently they *came to an open door, and within were more than fifty*

Roger Makes Acquaintance, etc.

persons, carousing, drinking, and playing with greasy cards and rude dice.

Now, Roger Egremont was no Puritan, nor was he given to low company, but, scared by the spectre of Fear which stalked through his mind, he would have welcomed a company of gallows-birds at that moment. Therefore, with a wink to Lukens, and slipping a couple of shillings in his hand, — for Roger still had some money, — he walked into the dim, foul, and noisy room, and making a low bow said, —

“Gentlemen, may I be allowed to be of your company?”

Huzzas arose, and a great black fellow, with a patch over his eye, replied, —

“Certainly, sir, if you will make your footing good.” Which meant paying for liquor wherewith all could get fuddled.

Roger threw some money to the turnkey, and the liquor being brought, sat and boozed and sang and gambled and cursed with the motley crew until the day looked pallidly in at the barred windows.

A prisoner with money, in Newgate, could have all he wanted and do as he listed, except he could not escape. And the reason of this was plain. Every prisoner became a source of revenue to his gaolers, and to let him go was to part with the goose that laid the golden egg; and consequently never was there such liberty within the walls of a prison, and never was prison better watched.

The assemblage in which Roger Egremont found himself was made up of all sorts and conditions of men. His friend with the patch over his eye was a highwayman. There were thieves and counterfeiters, Jacobite gentlemen and recusant curates; nearly all trades and

The House of Egremont

professions were represented. No one present, not even the highwayman, drank and swore and talked so recklessly as Roger Egremont. For to fear had succeeded despair. He shouted and sang and drank, because had he stopped for one moment to think he would have dashed his brains out against the stone wall. His head was steady and his nerves strong, so that it took much liquor and extreme brawling to bring him to the point where physical fatigue overcame mental anguish. But soon after daylight he was carried like a log to his cell, by Lukens and his assistant, Diggory Hutchinson, a brawny fellow, and new to the gaoler's business.

"They be often like this, at first," said Lukens, with a grin, as they threw Roger, limp and maudlin, on his rude bed. "'Tis apt to take gentlemen and clergymen this a-way. Sometimes they gits over it—sometimes they don't."

Roger fell into a deep sleep, which lasted until the afternoon. He waked, his vigorous frame recovered entirely from his debauch, but in an instant the horror of his situation returned upon him so that he rose, dressed himself quickly, and finding some money that he had concealed upon his person, coolly took out what seemed enough for him to get drunk on, and put the other away, and then sallied forth from his miserable room in search of the hell he had found the night before. He was not familiar with his surroundings, and, following a blind corridor, he heard the sound of a woman's voice, singing very sweetly. Presently he came upon an open door, leading to the quarters of Lukens, the turnkey, and there, in a room clean and bright, sat, spinning, Bess Lukens, the turnkey's niece, otherwise known as Red Bess from the warm color of *her auburn hair*.

Roger Makes Acquaintance, etc

She was tall, well formed, and vigorous beyond the common for a woman. Her complexion had retained its original fairness from the usual darkness of the abode in which she dwelt, but it had not robbed her cheek of its ruddy bloom, nor her lips of their scarlet tint. Her large, liquid eyes were of a reddish-brown, with black lashes and eyebrows, and when she opened her wide handsome mouth she showed teeth as white and regular as Roger's own.

She was about twenty years of age, and dressed in a plain brown stuff gown and a spotless linen cap, and she was spinning industriously and singing in a loud, sweet, rich voice as she spun. Had Roger Egremont been his natural and normal self, the sight of her sumptuous beauty would have warmed and interested him; but to all intent, he was not Roger Egremont at that moment, but a devil of despair and wickedness who had cast out Roger's identity and was masquerading in his body.

The girl caught sight of him, however, and stopped her spinning and singing. As she rose and advanced toward him, the light of a May afternoon falling on her supple figure, he could not but note, dull as his senses were, the natural grace of her movements, and her rich voice in speaking as in singing. She showed not a particle of bashfulness or coquetry in speaking to the haggard young gentleman before her, but said pleasantly, —

“You've missed your way, sir. This is where my uncle, Mr. Lukens lives, and the prisoners go not beyond the turn in the corridor, where the lantern hangs against the wall.”

“I know it, mistress; I have missed my way. Will you please to conduct me to the common room of the prisoners?”

The House of Egremont

"Now, look here, young gentleman," said Bess, suddenly adopting an authoritative tone, "you'd best keep away from that gang. You're new to it, — that I see with half an eye, — and if it's going with those people in the common room you are; you'll soon be in a bad way."

"Mistress," replied Roger, with great respect, "May I ask if you are head nurse in this little nursery? And what will you do with me in case I do not obey you? Give me a switching, perhaps."

The ever ready blood poured into Bess's smooth cheek, and sparks flew from her red-brown eyes. She seemed about to speak impetuously, but checked herself, and then said, pointing with a contemptuous finger, —

"Go back to where the lantern hangs, then turn to the right, and straight ahead."

She scudded back to her wheel, began to turn it violently, and burst into a song by way of showing her indifference. But, singing, she turned her head stealthily, and saw Roger's graceful figure, with his light-brown curls floating over his shapely shoulders, disappearing rapidly into the gloom of the corridor, where not even the May sunshine could penetrate.

As soon as he was out of sight and sound she stopped spinning and singing, and resting her chin on her hand thought, —

"Poor young gentleman. That is the very gentleman they brought in yesterday, and who got so drunk last night."

Bess Lukens was reckoned hard-hearted toward the other sex, although willing enough to do them a kindness provided she could hector over them in the act of doing it; but a strange softness came into her heart as she thought about Roger Egremont. He looked a

Roger Makes Acquaintance, etc.

man, every inch; and the saucy reply he gave Bess she secretly liked. But Bess had no time to waste in sentimental reflections. She was by nature one of the most energetic of mortals, with a passion for clean linen, order, and industry. Soon her wheel began to buzz again; but she could still see Roger Egremont's figure standing in the doorway, against the blackness of the corridor behind him, with the light shining full on his debonair face. As for Roger, he sped toward the scene of his degradation of the night before as if a thousand devils were after him, and gave not one thought to Red Bess, the turnkey's niece.

The second night was spent as was the first; and so, for one whole week, did Roger Egremont give himself up to liquor and cards and dice and the lowest company accessible in Newgate prison. At the end of that time even his strong, country-bred frame began to show the effects of his long debauch, and his mind, too, experienced the benefit of being turned from the consideration of its misery into the channel of cards and drink.

One night—the eighth after he entered the prison—Roger's strength gave out temporarily. Bess, passing along the corridor beyond her uncle's quarters, saw a figure lying prone, and going up to it found it to be Roger Egremont, not only drunk, but ill,—the Roger Egremont who had said so haughtily to William of Orange at their first meeting, "I am an English gentleman, by God!"

Bess looked at him, with pity and contempt struggling in her breast. She was as strong as any man, and leaning down, she actually managed to raise Roger to his feet, and to lead him to his dismal little room, where he fell, groaning, upon the bed.

Something in his face, something in his fate would

The House of Egremont

have touched even a hard heart, and Bess Lukens had one of the softest of hearts, along with a turbulent tongue and a warm temper. She covered him up with a thick quilt brought from her own quarters, — for he was shivering with cold, — rubbed his throbbing head, and at last soothed him into quietness and sleep. Then she went after Diggory Hutchinson, and commanded him to watch by Roger during the night; and Diggory, being a slave to her, did it.

Next morning early, Bess was at Roger's bedside. He was himself then, as far as liquor went, but the devil still possessed him.

"Why did you not let me die?" he said sullenly. "It's better than being in prison."

"Now, that's because you are a countryman," replied Bess, briskly. "They always take on worse than any others. They want to be out in the fields, a-hunting and what not. But you'll be out yet; some day, they'll get tired of keeping you. Haven't you got some relations or friends in London that might come to see you?"

Roger shook his head.

"I know scarce any one in London, and all my relations and friends that I care anything about are in the South, or with the King in France."

Bess nodded her head gravely, and, the two being alone, she said, —

"And they're right. I'm no papist, nor dissenter neither, but I don't like the Whigs. They're a low-born crew, and that's why I don't like 'em."

Roger had never expected to smile, much less laugh again; but the energy with which the turnkey's niece reviled the Whigs on account of their low birth, made him laugh in spite of himself.

Roger Makes Acquaintance, etc.

Bess, who was quick of wit, divined in a moment what he was laughing at, and flushing with anger and mortification, she told him so.

"And if I say they're low born, who should know it any better than I?" she said, bitterly. "Don't I know what it is to be low born? Don't people say, 'There goes Bess Lukens, niece of Lukens, the turnkey'? And though my uncle be an honest man, yet his calling is vile, and I know it. And I would rather be well born than to have all the money in the King's chests — that I would!"

Unshed tears were flashing in Bess's eyes, and her red mouth was quivering. Roger was ashamed of his thoughtlessness, but Bess was still, to him, only the handsome niece of the turnkey. His reply, therefore, was an attempt to flip her under the chin (which Bess skilfully avoided) and to say, —

"Never mind, my girl. One may be well born, and very miserable, too."

The devil did not leave Roger Egremont at once, although he had come in full panoply at short notice; but for a little while longer he alternated, coming and going fitfully. However, Roger was no longer ill, and so no longer in need of Bess Lukens's pity and nursing. But Bess, who treated Diggory Hutchinson — an honest lad, for all he was an under-turnkey — like a dog, and whose sharp tongue and strong arm were ample protection against any man in Newgate, could not so easily put Roger out of her mind. Oftentimes she stopped in her spinning and knitting and sweeping and dusting and bent her handsome brows to listen for the sound of his footstep, or his pleasant, courtier-like voice, as he passed to and fro at the end of the corridor. But she neither saw him nor had speech with him, until, near a

The House of Egremont

fortnight later, one evening just at dusk, she met him face to face in the mouth of the corridor.

Bess had been out to buy a broom, and had brought her purchase home with her. Roger was walking along immersed in black melancholy, but as Bess came into the circle of light made by the lantern on the wall, he noticed how handsome she looked, with her hood thrown back, and her face flushed with exercise. The devil in Roger Egremont made him pretend to be tipsy, and lurching forward he fell against her. Bess, with the most innocent good-will, mingled with wrath at his supposed condition, held him up; and the return he made for this was to clasp her in his arms, crying:

"Ah, my girl, you knew I was after those sweet lips of yours!" and he kissed her furiously and insultingly.

For one moment Bess stood dazed; then, commanding all her young strength, she thrust him away from her, so violently and unexpectedly that he staggered, and a fierce and well directed shove actually threw him on the floor. Then, like an active and capable general who knows how to follow up an advantage, Bess whipped out her broom, and attacking the prostrate Roger with the handle, gave him then and there the first and last beating of his life—all the time crying out, —

"Oh, you wicked man! Is this the way to treat a respectable girl? You call yourself a gentleman! I would not give a farthing for a wagon-load of such gentlemen!" and the while she whacked him unmercifully.

Roger was so dazed and staggered by this sharp and unexpected assault that for a minute he made no resistance. Then, suddenly springing up, his forehead came in hard contact with Bess's broom. With-

Roger Makes Acquaintance, etc.

out a groan, he sank backward, blood gushing from his temple.

Immediately, Bess Lukens proved herself a true woman, and having only given Roger his just deserts, fell to weeping over him and reproaching herself, meanwhile tearing up her apron to make a bandage for his bleeding head.

Roger lay, half stunned by the violence of the blow, until his head was bandaged, and then he was so white and still that Bess was frightened half to death, and cried, —

“I will go for help! Sure, I have near killed him!”

“No — don’t go,” said Roger, in a quiet voice, seizing her. “There was much blood, but little hurt. Help me, rather, away from this public place.”

With the aid of Bess’s strong arm, he got up, and managed to walk as far as Lukens’s quarters, where he sank on a bench, near the open window. The air from without was cool and sweet, the room was quiet, and the blow from Bess’s broom, which had knocked the memory of all things from Roger for a moment, seemed to mark his waking into another and a better mind. Bess sat near him, fanning him anxiously, and the tears welling up into her brown eyes. In truth, Roger’s air of dejection, his bandaged head, and the sudden sadness of his manner, might have softened any woman.

“Bess,” said he after a long silence — the first time he had called her by her name — “I thank thee for that blow. I think you have beat the devil out of me with your broom, for I feel now to be myself; a thing I have not been before since I entered these walls.”

“I knew you were not yourself, Master Roger,” replied Bess, tearfully. “I knew it was just rage and

The House of Egremont

misery and the like that had you by the throat and would not let you go."

"Pity you thought not of that when you belabored me," replied Roger, with the ghost of a smile.

"That was different," said Bess coolly, but with a brighter color. "'T was very rude of you to try and make free with me, and 't was for that I struck you."

Roger turned his one free eye toward her, and burst out laughing, and then said, in a voice at once gay, sweet, and earnest, —

"Fair mistress, I promise you I will never dare to make free with you again; and I swear to you I do not respect the Queen's Majesty herself more than I do you, Bess Lukens."

"Thank you, Master Roger Egremont," was all that Bess said in reply, but her heart was filled with joy, keen and piercing.

Roger did not long remain, but rising and saying good evening to Bess, walked steadily to his cell, and sat him down to consider. And Bess Lukens fell to work at her knitting, and was strangely lifted up into a blue and sunny heaven, as she sat alone in the twilight, and her face was quite glorified with a new softness and sweetness — until poor Diggory Hutchinson shambled in and tried awkwardly to make love to her, when she flew out against him and crossly bade him hold his tongue.

Roger Egremont spent that night and many succeeding nights and days in a self-examination which brought him to extreme anguish. And the natural vigor and clearness of his understanding coming to his aid to show him where he stood, he perceived that he was a very ignorant man, and that his ignorance *had done* much to land him where he was. All this

Roger Makes Acquaintance, etc.

came to him in the days after his rencounter with Bess, when he spent his time in silence in his room, looking fixedly at the little slip of blue sky to be seen through his one narrow window, and thinking how the hawthorn buds were swelling at Egremont, and that the tiny young of the game birds were hopping about fearlessly in the ferny thickets of the park, and the fish were flashing their silvery backs in the still and shadowed pools where the river ceased its brawling for a time. At night he lay wide-awake all night long, asking himself a thousand questions he had never asked before, his mind groping like a blind Samson, and crying out for light. And at last light came. He was ignorant, and he swore he would be so no longer.

Like most unlettered men, he knew little of the scope and power of learning. It represented to him then some vast unknown force with which other men ruled him. He jumped to the conclusion that only his own illiterateness and Hugo's book-learning had put him in Newgate prison, and he determined to remedy it as soon as possible.

This determination came to him in the dead of night, and by sunrise he was knocking at Lukens the turnkey's door, with a plan to carry his resolve into effect.

Bess was already up and hard at work when she opened the door to Roger.

"Bess," cried he, eagerly, "I must have books, pens, and paper. Go you into the city this morning, and bring them to me;" for Roger had still much the habit of command, instead of asking.

"Here are pens, ink, and paper," replied Bess, producing a few inferior specimens of each; "and as for reading, here are five or six books — one, of sermons; a good thing for a papist to read."

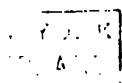
The House of Egremont

Roger knew so little that he regarded even these things with respect. However, he recalled the names of some of the books in the library at Egremont, and it struck him they would be more useful to him than sermons; so, taking some of the coarse paper Bess offered him, he made out, in a slovenly, ill-spelled way, a list of what he wanted. Bess was in no haste to get him things so useless as she considered books and pens and paper, and it was two whole days before he got what he wished. Meanwhile he avoided his late friends in the gaol — of whom most were rascals of a very black type — and sickened at the thought of his late carouses. And he struggled manfully, if awkwardly, with such literary appliances as the Lukens's household possessed. In those two days so great was the illumination of his mind that he found out the length, the breadth, the depth, and the height of his ignorance. He discerned that he could scarcely read his own writing, that he knew no arithmetic, no history, no geography, — nothing, in short, except what he had examined with his hands and seen with his eyes.

Bess brought him a miscellaneous collection, bought, not on the recommendation of the shop-keeper, for it was a principle with her never to take a shopman's opinion of his own wares, but with a view chiefly to getting the worth of Roger's money in the size of the books. To poor Roger then all books were alike, and he fell upon them ravenously. Nor did this book hunger abate during the days he stayed in prison. In time — in six short months — he got a very true notion of what he wished to learn, and after that he continued his fierce pursuit of knowledge with order and system. *He studied history, poetry, and belles-lettres, and*



"HERE ARE PENS, INK, AND PAPER"



5.

Roger Makes Acquaintance, etc.

made headway in French and Latin, of which he acquired a scholastic knowledge. He practised much with his pen, and from writing like a footman he acquired the most beautiful handwriting imaginable. He spent every waking hour with a book or a pen in his hand, — even the hour allotted him for exercise in the prison yard; and often he rose in the night to study and to write. His mind, naturally powerful, had been forced by his early ignorance to depend upon its own powers of observation entirely, — a thing commonly neglected by what are called educated men. But when on this noble superstructure of natural talents and keen observation was reared a knowledge of letters and tongues, Roger Egremont was mentally the full stature of a man. In short, the greatest benefactor he ever had was William of Orange, who returned the affront given him by making Roger Egremont twice the man he was before, or was likely ever to be.

Absorbed as Roger was in this new world of books and thought, it is not to be supposed that he was entirely forgetful of all else beside or that he became a saint as he became an educated man. He had still occasional communication with the outside world, and heard with inexpressible and ineffable rage that King William had bestowed the estate of Egremont upon Hugo, who was in the highest favor with the Whigs. The new King gave away English estates rashly, especially to his Dutch followers, and some years later the English Parliament forced a very general restitution; but no one, least of all, Roger Egremont, looked forward to the coming turn of affairs. The Egremonts, root and branch, were dispossessed, and being naturally men of adventure, were speedily heard from in various parts of Europe, — some living honorably, like decent, poor soldiers and exiles,

The House of Egremont

charms, he had the wit to see, and the candor to acknowledge to himself, that this poor girl was the least likely to fall of any woman in the world,

After much labor in learning, at last the joy of it came to him, and then, meaning to communicate that joy, he offered to teach Bess. She readily agreed, and being complete owner of her own time, Roger came to Lukens's rooms to play schoolmaster. No duchess in the land was more mistress of her establishment than Bess Lukens of her three rooms in Newgate. Her uncle, a watchful gaoler, but an indifferent uncle, made up his mind with great perspicacity about Bess from the first hour that she came to him, an orphan girl of sixteen or thereabouts. She was likely to go straight, but if she chose to go crooked she was not of the sort that could be stopped. And as she cooked his meals well for him, and kept his rooms clean and avoided the prisoners, as well as the other gaolers, he had no fault whatever to find with her. Latterly she had taken to keeping the earnings of her knitting and spinning to herself, and when her uncle asked for them, had flatly refused to give them up.

"I'll make ye," said Lukens, feebly, to this.

"Come and take 'em then," replied Bess; but the invitation remained unheeded. Therefore Lukens had nothing to say when Bess informed him that Master Egremont was intending to teach her to write and cipher. She could already read a little, and easily made out the words in the song-books, which she studied diligently, being ever singing, very much as Dicky Egremont was ever fiddling.

Her education in reading, writing, and ciphering progressed rapidly; but when Roger would have taught *her something* farther, she declined.

Roger Makes Acquaintance, etc.

"No," she said. "There is no need for any more learning for me. I have enough." As the ideas of the higher education were unknown in that age and place, Roger secretly approved her good sense.

When they were talking thus, they sat, as usual, in Lukens's main room. It was May again, and Roger had been a year in Newgate. In spite of his mind and heart being given over to the new empire of thought, he had strong and strange yearnings after his home. As Bess had said, he was a countryman, blood and bone of him, and sometimes the longing for Egremont and the whole bright world of out-of-doors came over him with a sharpness of pain for which he had no words. This fit had been on him for several days, and after Bess had announced that her education was finished his thoughts fled away to Egremont.

"Do you know," he said, "I can *feel* the grass growing at Egremont. 'Tis very green now; I think there is not, in England or anywhere else, such emerald green as we have there. And there are a couple of doves in an old rose tree near the fish pond, that have come every year for four years past; I wonder if they are there now. You'd be charmed to hear their sweet complaining, Bess; they sing as sweetly as you."

Bess smiled one of her broad, bright smiles at this, and continued to knit, for she was never idle a waking moment.

"I thought much of my hunting and fowling in the winter time," Roger kept on, "but at this time of year I did not think of killing any living thing. If I could but lay my leg on a good horse once more, and clap my boot heels into him, and have one good gallop through the park and over the hills — You should see the roll of the hills; 'tis beautiful at this hour in the day, they

The House of Egremont

Roger knew so little that he regarded even these things with respect. However, he recalled the names of some of the books in the library at Egremont, and it struck him they would be more useful to him than sermons; so, taking some of the coarse paper Bess offered him, he made out, in a slovenly, ill-spelled way, a list of what he wanted. Bess was in no haste to get him things so useless as she considered books and pens and paper, and it was two whole days before he got what he wished. Meanwhile he avoided his late friends in the gaol — of whom most were rascals of a very black type — and sickened at the thought of his late carouses. And he struggled manfully, if awkwardly, with such literary appliances as the Lukens's household possessed. In those two days so great was the illumination of his mind that he found out the length, the breadth, the depth, and the height of his ignorance. He discerned that he could scarcely read his own writing, that he knew no arithmetic, no history, no geography, — nothing, in short, except what he had examined with his hands and seen with his eyes.

Bess brought him a miscellaneous collection, bought, not on the recommendation of the shop-keeper, for it was a principle with her never to take a shopman's opinion of his own wares, but with a view chiefly to getting the worth of Roger's money in the size of the books. To poor Roger then all books were alike, and he fell upon them ravenously. Nor did this book hunger abate during the days he stayed in prison. In time — in six short months — he got a very true notion of what he wished to learn, and after that he continued his fierce pursuit of knowledge with order and system. *He studied history, poetry, and belles-lettres, and*



"HERE ARE PENS, INK, AND PAPER"



100

1. *Phragmites* (common)

Roger Makes Acquaintance, etc.

made headway in French and Latin, of which he acquired a scholastic knowledge. He practised much with his pen, and from writing like a footman he acquired the most beautiful handwriting imaginable. He spent every waking hour with a book or a pen in his hand, — even the hour allotted him for exercise in the prison yard; and often he rose in the night to study and to write. His mind, naturally powerful, had been forced by his early ignorance to depend upon its own powers of observation entirely, — a thing commonly neglected by what are called educated men. But when on this noble superstructure of natural talents and keen observation was reared a knowledge of letters and tongues, Roger Egremont was mentally the full stature of a man. In short, the greatest benefactor he ever had was William of Orange, who returned the affront given him by making Roger Egremont twice the man he was before, or was likely ever to be.

Absorbed as Roger was in this new world of books and thought, it is not to be supposed that he was entirely forgetful of all else beside or that he became a saint as he became an educated man. He had still occasional communication with the outside world, and heard with inexpressible and ineffable rage that King William had bestowed the estate of Egremont upon Hugo, who was in the highest favor with the Whigs. The new King gave away English estates rashly, especially to his Dutch followers, and some years later the English Parliament forced a very general restitution; but no one, least of all, Roger Egremont, looked forward to the coming turn of affairs. The Egremonts, root and branch, were dispossessed, and being naturally men of adventure, were speedily heard from in various parts of Europe, — some living honorably, like decent, poor soldiers and exiles,

The House of Egremont

others very basely if brilliantly. For all these was Roger concerned, but chiefly for little Dicky.

Almost a year had passed since Roger's trial, when, in response to a letter smuggled out of prison by Bess Lukens, Roger got a letter from Dicky, smuggled in. It ran, —

CLERMONT, April, 1689.

DEAR ROGER, — Was it you who wrote the beautiful letter signed with your name? I hear you do spend your days in learning. How excellent it is, and when the K. comes to his own again, you, Roger, will be a great man; I know it. I hear the P. of O. has given Hugo your estate. Well, I love you as much when you are poor as when you were rich. The K., the Q., and the little P. are very well. I saw them when I went to pay my devoirs at Christmas. I am studying very hard for a purpose I cannot put on paper. You'll know it in time — and I am well satisfied. But, oh, Roger, if you and I could only be together at Egremont once again! I love it as much as you do, and it makes me fierce to think it is not yours any more.

Mr. Egremont of the Sandhills and his sons were here of late, playing cards extremely, and have gone to Luxembourg with the Count Deslaudes, and a Scots gentleman, who also plays cards. I hear the Egremonts sometimes play the very shirts off their backs, and it makes me ashamed of the Egremont gentlemen. All of the others are not so, however. Cousin Hilary is grown very sober, and is in the corps of gentlemen-at-arms of the K. He, and his family have nothing, poor souls, their estates being sequestered, as you know. For myself, I have found friends, and they give me my education. All I can complain of is that they do not give me all the time I want to play the fiddle. 'Tis but an idle amusement, but I love it. Dear Roger, I long to see you.

From your ever affectionate friend and kinsman,

RICH'D EGREMONT

Roger Makes Acquaintance, etc.

As Roger's new passion for learning did not make a cloud between him and the few he loved, so it made him not blind to the attractions of a beautiful and humbly born girl, who was now his chiefest friend and daily companion; and he could not fail to see that this girl, so capable of love, anger, softness, revenge, and devotion, was wholly attached to him. But she had a sturdy self-respect, that kept the man she loved from presuming in any way. She had not the delicate reserves of speech and manner that mark the born gentlewoman; she drudged willingly and openly for Roger, spoke her mind freely when angry with him, and did not understand why he often blushed and refused her services. Her attitude toward him was rather one of keep-your-distance-or-I'll-make-you-sorry-for-it, but it was effective. She was already experienced in that school of temptation which must needs surround a girl of her beauty and condition. Her native honesty and a truly sublime common-sense had kept her in the right path heretofore. And when she realized, as she shortly did, that she was deeply and desperately in love with the Jacobite gentleman, the elevation of his station produced an elevation in her mind. She saw that Roger had an invincible pride, and if ever he could be brought to marry the turnkey's niece, it would be better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and he were drowned in the depths of the sea; and she scornfully refused to think of herself as that millstone. So she loved and drudged and sang, and if she wept and sobbed sometimes in the darkness of the night at her hard fate, she did no outward, daily fretting. As for Roger, he could not but love her, if only for her kindness to him; and however much he might doubt his own power of resistance to Bess's

The House of Egremont

charms, he had the wit to see, and the candor to acknowledge to himself, that this poor girl was the least likely to fall of any woman in the world,

After much labor in learning, at last the joy of it came to him, and then, meaning to communicate that joy, he offered to teach Bess. She readily agreed, and being complete owner of her own time, Roger came to Lukens's rooms to play schoolmaster. No duchess in the land was more mistress of her establishment than Bess Lukens of her three rooms in Newgate. Her uncle, a watchful gaoler, but an indifferent uncle, made up his mind with great perspicacity about Bess from the first hour that she came to him, an orphan girl of sixteen or thereabouts. She was likely to go straight, but if she chose to go crooked she was not of the sort that could be stopped. And as she cooked his meals well for him, and kept his rooms clean and avoided the prisoners, as well as the other gaolers, he had no fault whatever to find with her. Latterly she had taken to keeping the earnings of her knitting and spinning to herself, and when her uncle asked for them, had flatly refused to give them up.

"I'll make ye," said Lukens, feebly, to this.

"Come and take 'em then," replied Bess; but the invitation remained unheeded. Therefore Lukens had nothing to say when Bess informed him that Master Egremont was intending to teach her to write and cipher. She could already read a little, and easily made out the words in the song-books, which she studied diligently, being ever singing, very much as Dicky Egremont was ever fiddling.

Her education in reading, writing, and ciphering progressed rapidly; but when Roger would have taught *her something* farther, she declined.

Roger Makes Acquaintance, etc.

"No," she said. "There is no need for any more learning for me. I have enough." As the ideas of the higher education were unknown in that age and place, Roger secretly approved her good sense.

When they were talking thus, they sat, as usual, in Lukens's main room. It was May again, and Roger had been a year in Newgate. In spite of his mind and heart being given over to the new empire of thought, he had strong and strange yearnings after his home. As Bess had said, he was a countryman, blood and bone of him, and sometimes the longing for Egremont and the whole bright world of out-of-doors came over him with a sharpness of pain for which he had no words. This fit had been on him for several days, and after Bess had announced that her education was finished his thoughts fled away to Egremont.

"Do you know," he said, "I can *feel* the grass growing at Egremont. 'Tis very green now; I think there is not, in England or anywhere else, such emerald green as we have there. And there are a couple of doves in an old rose tree near the fish pond, that have come every year for four years past; I wonder if they are there now. You'd be charmed to hear their sweet complaining, Bess; they sing as sweetly as you."

Bess smiled one of her broad, bright smiles at this, and continued to knit, for she was never idle a waking moment.

"I thought much of my hunting and fowling in the winter time," Roger kept on, "but at this time of year I did not think of killing any living thing. If I could but lay my leg on a good horse once more, and clap my boot heels into him, and have one good gallop through the park and over the hills — You should see the roll of the hills; 't is beautiful at this hour in the day, they

The House of Egremont

are so calm, with the sheep nibbling the young grass that grows in the sheltered places. And the oaks, the best in England — oh, you may laugh — I would not take St. James's in exchange for Egremont. Not that it is so costly; there are many estates worth more, — but it is Egremont, 'tis all I had to love, except little Dicky, and that is why I play the fool about it."

As he spoke he threw back wearily from his forehead his curling light hair, and his dark eyes had such a look of misery that it went to Bess's heart. And she saw, besides, a small red scar on Roger's temple, which she had never noticed before.

"Roger," she said, leaning forward eagerly, — for they called each other frankly by their names then, — "what scar is that? I never noted it before."

Roger smiled in the midst of his low spirits.

"I'm sure you ought to know it, as you gave it me with your broom-handle. By combing my hair over it, though, no one can see it."

A passion of pity and remorse swept over poor Bess's soul. Although small, the scar was very disfiguring, and Roger's endeavor to conceal it showed that he was sorry to have it.

Bess laid down her knitting, and leaned closer toward him, her liquid eyes filling with tears, and her red mouth quivering. Some strange weakness possessed her; she would, at that moment, have given her right hand to have spared Roger that blow. The stress of her feeling went like an arrow in its flight to Roger's soul. His glance met hers, and they gazed, like ones enchanted, into each other's speaking eyes. Bess, scarce knowing what she did, laid her lips upon the scar, and two bright tears dropped from her eyes upon *Roger's face*. And then, her dark head rested against

Roger Makes Acquaintance, etc.

Roger's cheek, and their lips met. Time was no more for them.

They were roused from their dream in Paradise by a vast and thunderous sound, that rolled and reverberated through the hollow arches of the prison, and was like the roar of the heavens and the earth coming together. It was only the firing of the cannon at nightfall, to close the prison for the night, but to Bess Lukens and Roger Egremont, in their exaltation, it was like the crack of doom. They started apart, and each rose at the same moment, and looked at the other with a pale face. Bess spoke first, very calmly and quietly.

"I was to blame. I know I never can be your wife, not because of my fault, but because of my uncle's vile calling. But, Roger, neither one of us is of the stuff of which philanderers are made, and we must be on our guard lest harm come; and let there never be any more of this. For I tell you truly that love, in my mind, is mighty near to death, and I could kill myself if shamed, and kill the man that shamed me, albeit I loved him better than ten thousand lives."

"And love and death are near in my mind too," replied Roger, with the same quiet tone in which Bess spoke. "It will be death to any man who speaks an ill word against the woman I love, and death to her if she betrays me; and in every way my love will be guarded by my life. You are right; we are made of sterner stuff than most, and —"

"We must beware. But know this: if this moment you should offer to make me your wife, I have the courage to say nay, for I know 't would mean life-long shame for you, and I am not the woman to make so evil a return for honorable love. And so, I say, let us not

The House of Egremont

again so forget ourselves, and remember rather the gulf between us."

"Bess Lukens," said Roger, taking her hand as if he were taking that of a princess, "I have not the words to tell you how much I hold you in honor,—the more so that you have had no shield in this stormy life but your own born goodness, and I love you from the bottom of my heart. You have said there is a gulf between us, but that need not prevent us from being loving friends, and I hold you as the dearest friend I have on earth."

CHAPTER III

ONCE MORE AT EGREMONT

THE summer and the winter, and again the summer and the winter came and went, and still Robert Egremont lay in prison. There was some murmuring about his case, but King William was in the midst of his Irish campaign, and had little thought of one contumacious Jacobite more or less. When William returned to England, he inaugurated a policy of conciliation toward the disaffected, and most of the Jacobites in prison were offered their liberty on easy terms.

Roger Egremont's case had always been a perplexing one, the more so as he continued to be an object of popular sympathy. A parliamentary inquiry was threatened by the Tory parliament of 1690, in particular concerning the giving away of his estate to his half-brother. The Danby ministry thought it had found a solution of the problem in this particular case, by causing Roger Egremont to be informed that if he would make an application for pardon, it would be readily granted, together with a considerable sum of money, and that he might eventually hope for the restitution of his land.

To this, Roger made no answer except by a contemptuous silence. The offer was therefore repeated, and the reply, in Roger Egremont's handwriting, — very beautiful by this time, — was : —

“Mr. Egremont, of Egremont, in the County of Devon, has done nothing for which he should ask pardon of the

The House of Egremont

Prince of Orange. Mr. Egremont confidently expects to be released at an early day, on the demand of English freemen, and would not therefore lower himself by asking favors of a foreigner and a usurping prince."

Clearly, imprisonment had not broken the spirit of this rash and headstrong young man. In truth, although Roger could never have brought his haughty spirit to ask pardon for what he had done, yet, at that very time, a Jacobite rising was daily expected in England, and Roger fully expected to have the pleasure of shortly telling King James at his palace of Whitehall, of the manner in which the Earl of Danby's offer had been spurned.

The years that had passed had improved Roger's looks as well as his mind, although not to so great a degree.

He had learned much, and he had suffered much,—two great improvers of the human countenance. And the same improvers had been at work on Bess Lukens, to her advantage. Moreover, having a quick ear, her speech had become far more polished. Their relations had not altered in the least, except that the longer Roger knew her, the more he loved her, and the longer Bess knew him, the more she was in love with him,—two very different things, be it observed.

The two attempts of Lord Danby having failed to get Roger Egremont out of Newgate, and there being a considerable agitation in many quarters concerning him, King William himself bent his shrewd head to the business. And the result was that in April, 1692, after Roger Egremont had been nearly three years in prison, he was roused one night from a deep sleep, by armed *men*, and forced to dress himself, blindfolded, taken out

Once More at Egremont

of the prison, set and tied on horseback, and ridden southward at a smart pace.

All through the mild spring night the party travelled. Blindfolded as Roger was, and tied to his horse, a kind of intoxication of bliss came with the pungent sweet air of the budding spring, and the steady trot of a good horse under him. He did not apprehend any violence; no one threatened or offered to harm him, and he was by nature devoid of fear.

All through the night they rode, and when the day was breaking rosily, and the rooks cawing loudly, and the low of kine was heard, they stopped in a wood. This being the first horse exercise Roger had taken since he chased King William, he was overpowered with fatigue, and after having eaten ravenously he threw himself on the ground, and fell into a delicious slumber.

When he waked, although he was still blindfolded, he knew it was in the afternoon. He lay quite still, listening partly to the scant conversation of the men with him, from whom he could learn nothing, though they were civil enough. They gave him food again, and told him they would not start until sunset. Roger lay on his back on the new-springing grass, and drank in greedily all the sweet sounds, and imagined the fair sights of nature around him. He remembered Red Bess, and his heart softened when he knew how lonely she must be then, and, no doubt, anxious about him. He conjectured what was to be done with him, and concluded that he was to be put aboard a ship for France or Holland. Either would be an agreeable change from Newgate.

At sunset they again took the road, and travelled all the second night, and rested all the second day, and again set forth at sunset on the second day.

The House of Egremont

Roger felt the strangeness of this kind of travel, this blindness to night and day, and to the faces of his companions. But he was travelling steadily away from prison walls, and sweet to him were the cool dews of night, the silence and the softness as his horse's hoofs beat the high road ; and sweeter was the coming of the dawn, the wide sweep of the wind across fields and woods and hedges, and the day sleep in the heart of the woods, the scent of the leaves and grasses, the mellow drumming of the insects in the sun.

On the last stages of the third night there was something curiously familiar to Roger, in the way he was blindly travelling. He knew instinctively the character of the roadway, the sound of the streams under the bridges ; he tasted on his lips the faint saltiness which the sea wafts across the Devon hills. The cry of the birds was like the greeting of old friends ; the scents of the woods and fields were known to him. At midnight the party stopped in a thicket, rising a hill. Roger was told to dismount, and when his foot touched the earth his companions turned and galloped off, leading with them the horse he had ridden. As Roger struggled to tear away the bandage over his eyes, he could hear the disappearing hoof-beats of their horses echoing in the silent night.

In another moment his eyes were free, and he found himself alone upon a hillside, and on the ground by him a small portmanteau containing clothes and a considerable sum of money. As he would not accept of his liberty any other way, King William had simply flung him out of prison.

Roger recognized his surroundings at once. He was at Egremont. The night was radiant with moon and stars, and before him was a great rich beautiful moonlit

Once More at Egremont

landscape, the line of distant hills rising cloudlike upon the faint horizon, the masses of woods solemnly dark, the river making its way musically through copses and thickets, and then resting silently in broad black pools. Before him on the crest of a gentle hill, was a group of rustling elms, that he knew lay between him and the view of the mansion. Dashing through the trees he came in full sight of his home, lying in the plateau below. The house was lighted up, although it was late, and he could see servants and many persons moving about. Evidently some festivity was in progress. The rows of great windows blazed brilliantly, and the faint echo of music and the beating of the feet of the dancers was borne on the wandering wind of night. Roger Egremont stood and watched it, with a face pale with imprisonment, and pale with unspeakable wrath and anguish. The dazzling moon showed him that the oak avenue was gone, every tree cut down, and he struck his hands together in an agony of rage at what he considered robbery and mutilation of what was his. They thought, no doubt, that he would go, like a beaten hound, and ask his half-brother for a dole of money, and a roof to shelter him. Such indeed had been the King's hope, knowing very well that it would be as much as Hugo Egremont's life was worth, in the state of feeling of the country, to refuse a share of all he had with Roger. But Roger was of the temper which will have all or nothing. He would make no terms with those who had robbed him.

After an hour or two of anguish, he became calm. One of the things which he had found out, as the result of his newly acquired knowledge of books, was that he had more control over himself, more philosophy in short. He knew, sad as was his own case, that there had been

The House of Egremont

worse. He recalled them to his mind, and fortified himself with them.

The moonlit hours were spent by Roger Egremont on the lonely hillside, contemplating the noble patri-mony which he considered had been filched from him. Until his late introduction to the great new world of thought and books, Egremont had been his world. How to get it back unless the Dutchmen were driven from England, he did not know, but the sooner the actual struggle was begun, the better. He would go over to France, whither most of the active partisans of King James had gone, and would ask the honor of leading the very vanguard of the reconquering army.

The vivid moon grew pale and sank, leaving only the trembling stars set in the blue-black sky; the lights in the distant house went out; the earth and all its creatures slept; and Roger Egremont, throwing himself on the ground, fell into a heavy slumber. The night grew chill; he had no fire but the distant stars; he was hungry, but he had nothing to sup on except rage and sorrow. And at the same hour Bess Lukens, lying on her hard bed in Newgate, was crying her eyes out for him.

He awaked with the break of day. If the sight of Egremont by moonlight had pierced his soul with its beauty, it seemed to him even more beautiful in the still, pale loveliness of the early dawn. A faint rosy light lay over the green fields and stately woods; the little river, laughing between its alder banks, was like a young child in its first merry awakening. The larks and thrushes — Egremont had ever been celebrated for its birds — made themselves heard in sweet, soft chirpings before bursting into full-throated song. The deer, *red and dun*, came forth from the dells and thickets in

Once More at Egremont

the park, and tossing their delicate heads sniffed the freshness of the morning.

Roger Egremont noted all these things with a heart near to breaking. They had been his, and they were his enemy's — and that enemy was the half-brother he had befriended.

He perceived, however, that he must determine upon his course. He concluded that he had been flung down at Egremont in hopes that the sight of the place might induce him to open some communication, friendly or otherwise, with Hugo; and he shrewdly suspected that, much as Hugo might wish to kick him away from Egremont, the terror of public opinion would force him to do the handsome thing. But Roger could by no means endure the thought of accepting anything from his half-brother's bounty. He wished for nothing short of turning Hugo out, neck and crop, with such other vengeance as he might compass.

He could think of no place in England to go. In his prison he had gained no accurate account of who were the accredited agents of King James. He was near the sea, and he had money in his pocket; and in a little while he determined to make for France. But first he would go to his own village people and get food and a horse.

Before leaving the spot, he knelt down, and made what men call a prayer, but which was simply, as such prayers are, an outcry against his enemy and an appeal for God to lift His hand against that enemy. Nevertheless, Roger Egremont was a man of reverential heart, and devoutly believed that punishment would fall on him for his misdeeds, as he ardently hoped and believed it would fall on his half-brother.

Then, scraping up a handful of Egremont earth, he

The House of Egremont

tied it up in a handkerchief, shouldered his portmanteau, and made for the village of Egremont, from whose cottages chimneys the light-blue smoke was rising in the golden morning.

He walked through the edge of the park, steadfastly keeping his eyes in front of him.

As soon as he struck the highroad leading to the village, he met some laborers going to their work. They hesitated a moment, and then ran toward him.

"Is it that you have come back to your own, sir?" they cried, crowding around him.

"No," said Roger. "Our King, King James, has had his heritage filched from him, — why should I complain? But mark, all you men who till the fields of Egremont, that I shall yet come into my own. And I shall take no vengeance on any of you who eat the bread of my bastard brother, — you are poor men, laboring for your daily wage, — but I shall take vengeance on him."

The rustics looked at each other with meaning in their dull faces. One of them, an old man who had taught Roger the lore of birds and rabbits and hares and other wild things, spoke up, respectfully but freely.

"Hodge, the shoemaker, sir, and myself, we have often talked of that thing; and Hodge, who can read like a clerk, says no good ever came to a man from taking his father's or his mother's or his own bastard under his roof."

"Hodge is a philosopher," replied Roger, with a wan smile. "Which of you has a good horse to sell?"

There was a silence, until a young ploughman in a smock frock spoke up.

"None of us, master Roger, have a horse to sell you,

Once More at Egremont

but I have a good one for your worship to ride. He has not been always at the plough tail, and so is fitter than the others."

"Thank you," said Roger, showing some money. "After having robbed me of Egremont, the Dutchman gave me fifty pounds. The horse is worth three pounds."

"Nay, sir," replied the young ploughman, "I would rather have it that you took Merrylegs, and would give me the lease on the barn field when you come back. The lease is more to me than the horse."

Roger smiled again, not so sadly; these people expected him to come into his own; it was impossible that this topsy-turvy state of things should last.

While they had been standing in the road, talking, the word seemed to have spread like wildfire that Roger Egremont had come back. The general belief among the ignorant was that he would go straight to the mansion, and oust the interloper. As if by magic, every cottage on the estate was emptied, and in half an hour the whole tenantry had assembled in the village.

Roger, at the head of a kind of triumphal procession of ploughmen, ditchers, carters, and such humble people, walked to the village. There the women and children awaited him. Hodge, the shoemaker, more practical than the rest, made his wife stay indoors to prepare some breakfast for their former master; and then, announcing the fact in a stentorian voice, pushed his way through the crowd, and carried Roger off to his house at the end of the lane leading toward Egremont. That breakfast, of brown bread, a rasher of bacon, and cheese and ale, was something like the breakfast of royalty. Roger sat at a little table, in full sight of the village people, who clustered about the doors and

The House of Egremont

windows, watching him eat as the courtiers watched Louis le Grand. His appetite was good, and, as he told Hodge and his wife, it was the best mouthful he had tasted since he left Egremont.

At the conclusion of his meal he rose, and taking the pewter tankard of home-brewed ale in his hand, he came to the door, and said in a loud voice, —

“My friends, I do not ask you to drink the health that I shall drink; but I call you all to witness that I drink death and destruction to the Prince of Orange, and health and long life to his Majesty King James.”

The crowd knew little of the merits of either, but King James was an Englishman, and King William was not; in King James's time the true owner of Egremont was their lord; in King William's time, they were under the rule of an alien and a bastard; so they hurrahed cheerfully for King James; the women, who were more partisan than the men, striking in with their piercing treble, and even the children raising their shrill cries.

In the midst of it, a gentleman on a fine bay horse was seen trotting down the lane that led from the park gates of Egremont. It was Hugo Egremont. He had ever been an early riser, — for Hugo had all the virtues that bring success to a bad man as well as a good one, — and it was his practice, like Roger's, to ride over the estate before breakfast.

The vulgar dearly love a sensation, and so the crowd parted as the rider came nearer, and he rode directly up to the door of the shoemaker's cottage. The ploughman, meanwhile, had fetched his horse, Merrylegs, a well fed but clumsy cart horse, and by no means bearing out his master's high opinion of him as a roadster. A *rusty* bridle and a moth-eaten saddle, and Roger's

Once More at Egremont

portmanteau strapped on the crupper completed his equipment.

"What is all this racket about?" asked Hugo Egremont, as he drew up his handsome bay among the people.

"Master Roger has come back, sir," said Hodge, pointing to Roger standing in the low doorway.

Hugo Egremont's handsome florid face turned a sickly green. He got off his horse, advanced toward Roger with outstretched hand, and said the speech he had been rehearsing for three years past.

"Welcome, brother. I see you are in bad case; but trust me, you shall never want while I have a shilling."

For answer, Roger's wide mouth came open in a wider grin, and he did what he had not done since the day he was sent to prison with his chains clanking about his legs, — he laughed loudly and merrily. Dull and stupid as the rustics were around him, some magnetic thrill was instantly communicated to them, and they at the same moment burst into hoarse haw-haws.

Hugo Egremont's face grew greener. He was a man of great intelligence, and he knew the tremendous power of ridicule. He would have mounted his horse and ridden boldly through a stick-flinging and stone-throwing mob, but this grinning crew disconcerted him. He spoke again, however, covering his chagrin with much art.

"Your own imprudence, brother, has brought you to this pass," he said with an inimitable air of brotherly reproof. "The violent and unprovoked attack you made upon the King at your own table was bound to do you a mischief. As a younger brother, I was helpless to prevent, *but I was alarmed for you.*"

The House of Egremont

Roger said not one word, but laughed again. He could not but admire the ineffable impudence of his half-brother.

Finding it difficult to carry on a one-sided conversation, Hugo turned, and his eye fell on the ploughman who held the horse by the bridle. The beast's equipment for the road was certainly ridiculous, and Hugo Egremont found in it an excuse to laugh himself, as everybody around him was laughing.

"For whose journey," he asked, "is that miserable hack intended?"

"For Master Roger's, sir," civilly replied the man. Hugo Egremont, still by a great effort, kept a scornful smile on his face; and then every other face grew grave, and the ploughman added, —

"If your honor smiles, sir, at the notion that such a horse is good enough for Master Roger, we all do smile with you. But if you smile because he has no better — well, sir, 'tis because there is no better one in this village."

Hugo, always master of himself, and better able to see himself as others saw him than many worthier men, knew that his triumph would be to conquer Roger's ill-will. So, taking his hat off, and showing a closely cropped black poll, to be surmounted later in the day by a handsome periwig, he said smoothly, as he patted his horse's neck, —

"Whatever hard feelings, Roger, you may have for me, I cannot forget that you are my brother; nor do I wish to forget all the kindness I had from you. So I trust you will not refuse to come to Egremont. The estate was sequestered; what more right than that it should come to a younger brother, who could maintain *the family name*, and who would do by you as liberal a

Once More at Egremont

part as you could wish? So do not feed your resentment, but return with me."

Roger's reply to this was what might have been expected from that headstrong and determined young man.

"No!" he shouted, his voice ringing so loud that it frightened the cawing rooks from the trees overhead, "I go not to my house as long as you, bastard, and your brood are in it. Some day I will come and turn you out on the roadside. Look out for that time."

Roger Egremont mounted his awkward beast, and taking off his hat, made a low bow to the people, who returned it with shouts and cheers and tears, — some of the women sobbing loudly.

"I take with me," he said, "a handful of earth from Egremont. Every night of my life shall it lie under my head, so that I may ever sleep on English ground. When the King returns and comes into his own, then will I come too. Until then, fare you well."

CHAPTER IV

SHOWING HOW ROGER EGREMONT FALLS INTO GOOD COMPANY

THE inn of Michot was almost as well known at St. Germain as the palace itself — and Madame Michot and her lame son, Jacques, were as well known as the inn. For this inn was the rendezvous for all the gay blades, young and old, among the fifteen or twenty thousand English, Scotch, and Irish Jacobites, who crowded the little town of St. Germain. And especially was it the resort of the body of guards, known as the gentlemen-at-arms, who attended the poor, broken-down old King James Stuart, at the palace. Sad dogs some of these were, and great was the score chalked up against them — and oftentimes generously rubbed out by Madame Michot. For, as the good woman said, some of the worst debtors she had were among her pleasantest customers, and kept the old place lively; and Madame Michot took as much pride in having her common room a jovial place as any duchess in Paris gloried in the brilliance of her salon. These merry gentlemen from over the sea made many promises to their hostess of what they would do for her when the King came into his own again, — for, like most men ill treated of fortune, they had great confidence in her future favors. In truth, if Madame Michot were granted a royal audience for every favor she had done *an exiled Jacobite*, she would have spent her whole

Roger Falls into Good Company

time in the King's company. She was a handsome, stout woman, gifted with a good heart and a true genius for inn-keeping, and cherished but one folly in the world. Her otherwise sound brain had been a little turned by the laughing promises made by these devil-may-care, rollicking exiles, — for that was the sort which most frequented the inn of Michot. In her inmost heart Madame Michot fancied herself going to court at the palace of Vitall, as she called it, escorted by noblemen and gentlemen whom she had supplied with meat and drink, never asking for payment. And the object of her visit would be to get something handsome for poor Jacques — Jacques, the only son the King had left her at home; who, but for his lame foot, would be with his brothers under Marshal Villeroy. Madame Michot had never been able to decide exactly what she would ask for Jacques, but it would be "something handsome," and Jacques should be able to sit at table with gentlemen.

The inn was a stone building of only one story, with a half-story, in the shape of a great bare attic, over one part of it. Originally it had been a huge granary, but being pleasantly situated on the sloping ground between the forest of St. Germain and the rich low-lying meadows through which the silver Seine runs laughing, Madame Michot had seen its good points, and buying it, had turned it into an inn. It had no courtyard, but opened directly upon a grassy space with trees. Behind it, toward the river, was an ancient orchard, and all around it were sweet fields and vineyards. Afar off could be seen the stately châteaux of the nobility, proudly secluded in their pleasure grounds. Looking upward to the right, was that glorious terrace of St. Germain, made by Louis le Grand, and which he

The House of Egremont

could not surpass even when he wished to make Versailles the wonder of Europe. This terrace, a full two miles long, and as straight as line and rule could make it, four hundred feet broad, with the formal clipped trees, as straight as soldiers on parade, lining the side toward the town and forest; the stone parapet with its iron balustrade on the other side, overlooking a sheer descent of two hundred feet into the valley of the Seine; the stately old palace of Francis the First, with the pavilion at the very edge of the terrace, built by the great Henry for his "Charmante Gabrielle;" the gigantic flights of stone steps, down which twenty men-at-arms could march abreast; and in the blue distance, the slender spire of St. Denis shining,—St. Denis, where all the French kings are buried, and of which that slender spire was such a bugaboo to the Grand Monarque that he utterly deserted the palace at St. Germain, and gave it over to his poor relations, the exiled King and Queen of England,—all this beauty, poetry, and romance was in full sight of the inn of Michot.

The public room of the inn opened directly from the roadway. It was long and low, with narrow slits of windows, and a great fireplace in one end. The only fault Madame Michot had to find with her foreign patrons, who had, as it were, taken possession of the house, was that they knew no moderation in feeding the fire. On mild nights, when a few fagots would have been a plenty, thought Madame Michot, these wasteful English and Irish and Scotch would throw on great armfuls of wood, making the blaze from the fire to light up the whole place, and to dim the candles placed in sockets along the walls. Madame Michot *protested*, sighed, charged for wood, and charged high;

Roger Falls into Good Company

there was no breaking up the custom short of turning the exiles away, and she had no heart for that.

At the other end of the room, opposite the fireplace, was a broad, low stairway of oak, blackened with time and smoke, which led to the upper story. This was on one side of the great outer door. On the other was a raised platform, with a chair and a table for Madame Michot, and behind it a cupboard for her choice liquors. An iron grille screened this platform off from the main room, and presented a fiction that Madame Michot did not know everything that went on around the huge fireplace and at the long table. Madame Michot, however, had no illusions on this point. It was the custom for the frequenters of the inn—gentlemen all—to make a profound bow in passing the excellent woman, who, having grown very stout on her own good fare, did not rise, but returned these salaams by a polite inclination of her head. Dukes, marquises, and barons thus paid homage to her; for the inn of Michot was distinctively an aristocratic institution, although entirely different from most aristocratic institutions in being very jolly. The fact was, however, that the palace of St. Germain was exceedingly dull, and the inn was a city of refuge to gentlemen who loyally supported King James, but who had no mind for the austerities he practised. The royal table was stinted, and the wine was poor; the Queen went with shabby gowns and equipages, that the money might be given to penniless gentlemen and ladies, who eked out a living in lodgings in the town. Much of this money went to the inn, but all who spent there had full value received; and it was a place where a man could laugh and sing, after having done his duty by the great gloomy palace. And there was always laughing and singing going on of

The House of Egremont

evenings, and sometimes all night long, in that quaint old common room, to say nothing of dancing and playing. The cards and dice were flying every night; the violins and viols da gamba were forever thrilling and making melody; some voice was ever being lifted up in song, proclaiming the joys that awaited all good Jacobites in England; and rattling choruses in praise of war and love and wine, and dispraise of William of Orange, were perpetually rolling and reverberating among the black rafters of the ceiling. And the Scotch gentlemen liked a loup and a fling when the fiddles played a Scotch reel, and the Irish gentlemen commonly jigged it when the fiddles spoke Irish, and the Englishmen footed it nimbly when "Kiss me sweetly," was played.

On the whole, the inn of Michot was about the most cheerful place in the town of St. Germain. It was not, however, the most peaceable, although in general good feeling prevailed. Madame Michot could never recall without a shudder the night that the Irish gentleman, Mr. O'Mahoney, and Sir Thomas Chesbrough had it out with musketoons in the orchard behind the house, by the light of a couple of stable lanterns, each gentleman protesting he could not wait until morning or for better weapons. And the look on the Irish gentleman's gray face, when he was brought in shot through both lungs, haunted Madame Michot for long. Then, there was that affair between Colonel Macgregor, and Sandy Murray, Lord Tullibardine's nephew, in which both were pretty nearly sawed to pieces with each other's rapiers. Decidedly, the inn of Michot was like the Comédie Française — it had its tragedies as well as its comedies.

Like all truly aristocratic institutions, this inn was on a democratic basis. It was "First come, first served."

Roger Falls into Good Company

Nothing was reserved for anybody, and the poorest gentleman, who had not got a penny from England for a year, was as well served as he who had got a remittance yesterday. And so great was Madame Michot's talent for inn-keeping that she prospered even under this system.

And of this pleasant inn was Roger Egremont to make acquaintance, about ten days after he had last seen Egremont. The evening was cold and chill for mid April, and a small, dismal rain was falling. The river was muddy, and the town, lighted only by the faint gleam from candle-lit windows, looked uninviting as Roger approached it in the misty gloom. Roger had with him, to make his way in a difficult world, a pair of pistols, some changes of linen, and less than fifty pounds in money. His soul was as gloomy as the evening. He ached, and was wearied with many days of riding, after three years of imprisonment. He had grown conscious, day by day, in seeing people at inns, and along the high road, that he was poorly dressed, his horse was a scrub, his accoutrements ridiculous. As for poor Merrylegs, he was literally on his last legs, although Roger had been tender with him, and had often walked rather than burden the creature's feeble back. At last, just as the highroad turned from the river, the horse suddenly sank upon his knees. Roger leaped off, and one look at the poor beast's glazing eyes showed him that the end of journeys had come for the ploughman's nag. Roger quickly unstrapped the saddle, and sat down on the ground patting the horse's head. It came to him that the dumb creature felt the strangeness of his surroundings; used to the sweet fields of Egremont, and knowing only the air of Devon, he felt lonely in this strange land; and then Roger smiled at the conceit, but smiled very sadly.

The House of Egremont

After a while the horse scrambled to his feet, and just as he got upon his trembling legs with Roger's help, a horseman, with a servant riding behind him, galloped out of the dusk. A clear, resonant voice rang out in the misty twilight, saying in French, —

“Hold! It is impossible you should mount that poor beast. The horse is dying.”

Roger deigned no answer to this, but gently led the poor tottering horse to the river's brink.

When Merrylegs felt the cool water about his legs, he stooped down, and drank a little, and then lifted his head with an almost human look of resignation in his eyes. Roger, standing knee deep in the water, patted his head, saying kindly, —

“Good-bye; good-bye, old Merrylegs. You have been a faithful friend, and you shall have no more work nor pain in this world.”

Then, trying to help the horse along, Roger led him to the side of the road. This brought him nearer to the horseman, and quite close to the serving-man, who was watching with a grin the proceedings. Roger primed his pistol, put it to Merrylegs' head, and fired. The poor beast dropped in his tracks, and the next instant, the servant, to his horror, found himself looking down the muzzle of the other pistol, and heard Roger Egremont, in a passion of rage, crying, “Laugh once at that poor horse, and you are a dead man!”

The man's face changed as quickly as Punchinello's in the show.

His master uttered no word of resentment; Roger had spoken in English, and the horseman responded in the same tongue, which was plainly his native language.

“Sir,” he said, “if you are subject to these gusts of *rage*, you will often find yourself in trouble. Neverthe-

Roger Falls into Good Company

less, I think you excusable just now. I had no mind to laugh, I assure you."

At the first word Roger Egremont recognized that no ordinary man was speaking. The music of the stranger's voice, his tall and graceful figure were obvious; his face was long and pale. Roger could see no more. But to hear once again the English tongue was sweet, and to know that here was a man who understood grief for the loss of a dumb creature was grateful. Roger recovered himself, and replied calmly:

"He was the gift of a very humble man, who could ill spare him, and he bore me faithfully until his strength gave out, — and he was the last living thing I owned from my country."

"England?"

"Yes. He was not really worth bringing across the water, but I could not leave him behind."

"If you will do me the honor," said the stranger, "to accept of my servant's horse, it is entirely at your service; and my man can take your saddle where you wish in the town, as I presume you are bound there. Permit me to introduce myself. I am the Duke of Berwick."

Instead of warmly reaching out to take the hand that Berwick extended, Roger hesitated a moment. He hated bastards so — having good cause — that he hated the King's bastard. However, he did offer his hand and replied, —

"And I am Mr. Egremont, of Egremont, but late from Newgate prison."

"I know you," replied Berwick, eagerly; "have you news for us?"

Roger shook his head.

"Truly," he replied, "I was so taken up with my

The House of Egremont

private wrongs and sorrows that I did not take the trouble I should to bring news to his Majesty. But when a man has been shut up three years in prison, and when he is turned out, as I was, and finds himself beholding his estate in the hands of his father's bastard — ”

“Come, my friend,” said Berwick, with a bright flush on his handsome face, “let not that word be used before me. Remember your manners.”

“’Tis hard to remember anything when a man has been so buffeted as I,” cried poor Roger, throwing his arms about. “I only know that I could not get to France fast enough, for there only could I find arms in my hands to drive this Dutch usurper out!”

To this Berwick replied dryly, “I fear it will be a little time yet before we shall find arms in our hands. But meanwhile mount, and let us be going.”

Roger mounted the servant's horse, and with his portmanteau behind him made for the town with Berwick. Each scanned the other closely. Roger knew little of Berwick, beyond that he was the son of King James and Arabella Churchill, and Berwick knew nothing of Roger beyond his name and condition; but in some way they knew each other well before they reached the inn of Michot, where Berwick advised Roger to put up. The episode of the dead horse had well served to throw light upon the character of each.

Not since the day he had last sat at meat in his own house had life seemed so bright to Roger Egremont as it did when the cheerful glow from the windows of the inn came before him, and the sound of a rollicking chorus floated out. Berwick had explained the character of the place to him.

“*And many of us, graceless dogs that we are, prefer*

Roger Falls into Good Company

this homely, cheerful inn to the palace," he said, half smiling. "We have not the front to be gay in the presence of the King and Queen; we are cowards about spending our money when we see their Majesties practising all sorts of privations that their followers may eat. But here we can at least sing,—not that I do much as a singer, for my voice is like a crow with the quinsy,—and play for what loose coin we have, and talk about the merry days ahead of us in England; and they are the chief joys of those who have followed the King."

By that time they had dismounted, their horses had been led away, and Berwick pulled open the great nail-studded door of the common room. The light, although ruddy, was not dazzling. The chilly evening made good excuse for a fire,—so thought the guests of the inn; Madame Michot was of a different mind, but sighed and said nothing. Along one side of the room was a long table, around which half a dozen gentlemen were seated; the savory dishes thereon, and the delicious odor of spiced wine were like gales of Araby to Roger Egremont. About the fire sat several gentlemen, and there was a twanging of fiddle-strings among them and a fresh young voice soaring in a song.

*"Nous n'avons qu'un temps à vivre,
Amis, passons le galement,
Que celui qui doit le suivre,
Ne nous cause aucun tourment."*

Roger did not immediately recognize the voice, but it thrilled him to his heart; and the next minute a short, boyish figure leaped over the chairs in the way, and began dancing an English jig like mad.

"Dicky! Dicky!" shouted Roger, joyfully, but his

The House of Egremont

voice could not be heard over the sharp music of the violin, the gay clattering of Dicky's heels, and the laughing and the singing of many voices, the rhythmic clapping of hands, and the merry stamping of feet. It was honest, noisy mirth, in which English, Scotch, and Irish bore their part.

Roger watched and listened with a quivering of joy and hope; he had almost forgotten that people could laugh and dance and sing. Dicky, at last, with three great thumps of his heels upon the floor, and throwing his hat in the air, ran toward the gentleman playing the fiddle, and choked him until the fiddle fell from his hand; and then Roger dashed through the door and down the long room, and catching Dicky in his arms, cried, —

“My lad, how glad I am to see thee, and see thee well and hearty!”

Dicky, half smothered, gripped Roger around the neck.

“Old boy, you cannot be as glad to see me as I am to see you; for, look you, these three years past, every day have I said to myself, ‘I wish I could see Roger this day!’”

The Duke of Berwick had followed Roger in, and walked along, hat in hand, and bowing right and left, not forgetting Madame Michot at the door. His greetings were respectfully returned, but no man rose at his approach; the code of the common room at Madame Michot's inn put duke and commoner on the same footing.

“Gentlemen,” cried Berwick, warming his hands at the fire, “this is Mr. Roger Egremont, of whom we have all heard, who hurled a plate of beans in Dutch *William's* face. By what hair-breadth escapes he has

Roger Falls into Good Company

made his way from Newgate here, I know not, but he must tell us, after he is filled with some of the best wine Madame Michot has. Here, Jacques, a quart of the best, mind you."

"Indeed, sirs," replied Roger, coloring and trying to disengage himself from Dicky, "I am ashamed of much in my escape. I was taken blindfolded out of prison, this Monday a fortnight, and carried south to my own place, — not mine at present, however, — and there, being much vexed and tried, and knowing little of affairs in England, I had but one thought, to get my carcass to France. For I tell you, after three years in prison, a man must be on the move. I have no particular news to bring from England, but rather do I ask for news here."

Immediately all rose and crowded around him. It was enough that he had just come from England. Such news as he had was stale enough, and the frequent and easy communication between St. Germain's and the islands made the refugees very much acquainted with what was going on across the channels. But they would by no means be satisfied.

"Is it a dry or a wet season, I pray?" asked one gentleman, anxiously, who owned not an acre of land, while another desired very earnestly to know how the fish were biting in the Ouse. Berwick, laughing, came to Roger's rescue.

"Some of you may have had a taste of prison, but our friend hath had a full dose; so give him leave to eat and drink. Come with me, Mr. Egremont, and let me make you known to the hostess of this inn."

Roger followed him back toward the door, and to the other side of the grille, where Madame Michot, stout and placid, checked off the slips the serving-men brought her for liquor.

The House of Egremont

"Madame," said Berwick, bowing low, "this is Mr. Roger Egremont, an English gentleman, late out of Newgate prison. I will stand godfather for him at this place, and beg you will give him no inferior liquor."

Madame Michot, after considerable effort, managed to rise and curtsy in return for a profound salute from Roger, and then he and Berwick returned, and all gathered around the table and began to make an English brew of liquor. Dicky was head man at this, and Roger, inwardly laughing, wondered what had become of Dicky's piety.

They sat next each other, and every now and then Dicky would give Roger an affectionate shove, to which Roger would respond by a whack on Dicky's back, and it was as if they had never been parted. Dicky was quite unchanged, — his homely, round, bright face sparkling with good humor and good sense, — and Roger had seen for himself that Dicky was as handy with the violin, as sweet-throated with his songs, and as light of heel as ever. Roger, however, was completely changed, and yet Dicky loved him not the less, but admired him the more. Before, he had been a taciturn man, knowing little to say, and having sense enough to hold his tongue. Now he bore his part in talk, and spoke well and plainly, and always to the point. His very countenance, formerly somewhat gloomy and vigilant in spite of a laughing sprite in his black eyes, was grown open, frank, and animated. Imprisonment had made him pale and spare, but his looks were thereby improved. Dicky thought him the finest fellow in the world.

"And tell us, Roger, how you passed your time in prison," cried Dicky. "In your letters you said you

Roger Falls into Good Company

had grown mighty bookish, and your writing was like the town clerk's."

Roger blushed a little; he wished Dicky had not let on that his writing and his bookishness was a thing of yesterday.

"I would have gone mad but for books. There were not many Jacobite gentlemen in the prison, scarce one when I left, for the Prince of Orange has a long head, damn him, and seeing that the people have but taken him on his good behavior, he conciliates all parties. But what of the King's return?" he asked eagerly.

There was a silence, which was broken by Berwick saying, —

"We drink to the King's return every night; let us do it now, with a hip, hip, hurrah!" which was done in a bowlful of hard liquor, and to a roaring chorus trolled out, with Dicky's high, clear, flute-like voice soaring above the rest, —

"Though for a time we see Whitehall
With cobwebs hanging on the wall,
Instead of gold and silver bright,
That glanced with splendor day and night,
With rich perfume
In every room,
All to delight that princely train,
These again shall be,
When the time we see,
That the King shall enjoy his own again,
That the King shall enjoy his own again!"

The chorus echoed and re-echoed among the black rafters of the roof; the King on his knees in his dreary palace afar off might have heard that resounding cry of hope and triumph.

Roger, standing up and waving his glass with the

The House of Egremont

rest, felt a glow of good cheer and companionship; so would he sing and shout for the King some day in the hall at Egremont. The thought of poor Bess came into his mind as he was bawling for the King, but man-like he made himself comfortable thinking, "Doubtless it is best that we should part, but God bless her wherever she is;" and then he joined in the chorus and sang as loud as any.

Not many gayer evenings were spent at the inn than the first night there of Roger Egremont. When the bats and owls in the forest of St. Germain's were crying aloud in the midnight, the fiddle was again singing, and the rafters trembling with the carolling. There was a song with the fiddling, — a very tender song, — and Dicky was the singer. Some Scotch gentlemen did the manly sword dance very nobly, but one did it better, and that was Dicky. There was play, and a good deal of money changed hands, and poor Dicky lost all he had — about seven livres — and laughed rather ruefully at his own ill luck. And at last, when the black sky was turning a ghostly gray, and in the heart of the forest there was a rustling of wings and a chirping, and a small wind stirred the budding twigs, Roger and Dicky went up together to the great, bare attic room, and throwing themselves down on a pallet, slept with Dicky's arm around Roger's neck, as they had often slept when they were lads together at Egremont. And under their pillow was the little bag of earth without which Roger had not slept a single night since leaving his native land.

It was near noon before Roger waked. When he first stirred he thought he was in Newgate, as he had thought on waking every morning since he left it. *But when he opened his eyes he quickly recognized*

Roger Falls into Good Company

the large attic room, with little in it. But through the open window came cheerful sounds of the common things of life, — the creaking of a bucket from the well, the sound of voices in the cherry orchard; and the spring sun was streaming in the one great window. Beside the window sat Dicky, fully dressed, and deeply absorbed in a little book, which Roger knew to be a book of devotion. Roger laughed to himself; he knew Dicky of old. The book of devotion always appeared after a particularly merry night in the old days at Egremont.

"Well, my lad," cried Roger, sitting up on his pallet. "At penance again?"

"Roger," replied Dicky, turning on him a round, rosy, solemn face, "you should not be so light-minded — though why should I reprove you? Am not I myself more given to idle pleasure than you?"

"And oh, I am a wicked fellow, and but little adapted to the priestly calling I covet, more through pride than piety I fear," replied Roger, mimicking Dicky exactly; at which Dicky laughed and blushed and threw a cushion at him.

"Oh, Dicky," continued Roger, still smiling, "how good it is to meet a thing as fresh as the daisies of the field, like you! You will forever be sinning and repenting like a boy. Let me see; you are now two and twenty, and I am four and twenty — heigh ho! 'Tis time to be rising and dressing, and then we will take a long walk in the forest I saw last night, — all our talks at Egremont were out of doors. Each of us has much to say and hear, and I think we understand one another better in the woods and fields."

And into the woods and fields they went, deep and far; for St. Germain's was seething like a pot with

The House of Egremont

human beings, and it was hard to escape them, especially, if one was late from across the narrow seas.

Dicky, as usual, poured out his soul. He had studied hard at Clermont, where there were many English youths of the best families, until, his eyes giving out, he had been obliged to give up his books for a season. The fathers at Clermont had sent him to St. Germain's, partly that he might be within reach of the Paris eye-surgeons, and partly for rest and recreation.

"I am still minded to be of the Society of Jesus. But I am afraid I am leading a sad life," said Dicky. "I can't get over my love of fiddling and dancing and playing; and this town does little else, it seems to me, but fiddle, and dance, and play. At the palace, 'tis different, but, it seems to me, the farther hope flies away of our return to dear England, the more the people frolic, and dance, and drink. And I tell you, Roger, my chief hope now is in the Duke of Berwick, — the Pike, they call him, because he is so tall, and thin, and straight; and I think the name suits him, because he does not bend to flattery, nor to anything ignoble. He is the only man who has the confidence of all, and is the favorite of the French King too. Now tell me, Roger, something of thyself."

Roger told him all, not omitting Red Bess, and the way she had made his acquaintance, and the attack with the broom she had made on him.

"And you would not think, my lad, that any woman could wallop me," he said, laughing and coloring a little. "But what with the surprise and the not knowing how to defend myself against a woman, and the girl's amazing strength and spirit, I acknowledge I was handsomely drubbed; and it drove the devil out of me, and made me once more a gentleman. I will write to

Roger Falls into Good Company

her this very day, for I have no better friend on earth than that poor girl."

"And are you sure, Roger," asked Dicky, anxiously, "that — that — you do not love this girl?"

"Love her? I know that I *do* love her. As for marrying her, I own that I have no mind to put a gaoler's niece in my mother's honored place, or to give my children, old Lukens, the turnkey, for an uncle. But I tell you on my word that this woman would no more stoop to be less than my wife than the Queen's Majesty herself. Bess Lukens came into the world — a rough and briery place for her, poor girl — with a natural virtue that nothing can impugn. And 'tis a very robust virtue too; I make no doubt she has clipped many a rude fellow over the head as she clipped me. But in general, men are afraid of her, and in spite of her beauty, I fancy she has but little trouble in making them keep their distance."

"And Hugo? Tell me all of him."

Roger's face darkened, but he told all he knew of Hugo, and likewise all he designed to do to his half-brother when God gave him the chance.

It was late in the afternoon before they returned to the inn. There they found a letter from Berwick.

MR. EGREMONT, — The King hath signified his pleasure to see you as soon as you are prepared to come. This evening, at seven of the clock, I shall be in attendance on his Majesty, and shall have pleasure in presenting you. Pardon this scrawl.

Yr. obt. svt.,

BERWICK.

"But I am not dressed like a gentleman," cried Roger. "I do not mind that I have not a laced coat and hat, but I cannot present myself unseemly before my King!"

The House of Egremont

The resources of Madame Michot's inn were ample, however, to fit Roger out for one night; and in a velvet coat not his own, and faded satin knee-breeches, and a pair of Dicky's black silk stockings, he presented himself at the château of St. Germain's on the stroke of seven.

He was met by Berwick, who conducted him to the King's closet. On this their second meeting Berwick and Roger greeted each other like friends of long standing. The King's closet, like most things about the palace, was gloomy. King James, lean, wrinkled, broken, but still wearing something royal in his aspect and manner, received Roger graciously. The Queen, poor Mary Beatrice, still young, still beautiful, her dark Italian eyes still beaming with light, was more gracious yet. Berwick remained and the King desiring to know all that had happened to Roger, he began and told his story from the day the troopers of William of Orange had surrounded Egremont, and its master had said farewell to it. His tale was pitiful enough, and it lost nothing in the telling. Roger had the natural gift of the story teller; his hardships seemed the harder from his relation of them. He told all that had befallen him, except one thing — the story of Red Bess, the gaoler's daughter. He was guarded in his allusions to his half-brother, on Berwick's account; yet he could not forbear, out of the stress and storm within him, speaking of Hugo as "my half-brother, Hugo Stein, the son of my father's sin."

King James winced at that. Berwick suddenly turned his face the other way, and the red blood dyed his face and neck; but he showed no abatement of good-will toward Roger.

When the King spoke, it was not without dignity.

Roger Falls into Good Company

James Stuart knew not how to govern, but he knew how to bear misfortunes calmly and even majestically; and he was far more kingly in his dreary court of St. Germain's than he had ever been at his palace of Whitehall.

"I shall be glad to have you enrolled, Mr. Egremont, in the corps of gentlemen-at-arms. 'Tis not much to offer you," he said with a faint smile, "but it marks, at least, my appreciation of the loyal gentlemen who have abandoned so much to follow their King. No doubt, at this moment the Prince of Orange would be glad if he could see you once more in the enjoyment of your estate, but I know of no Egremont, so far, who has accepted a bribe."

"True, your Majesty, and I thank you for the honor you have done me in permitting me to be of that corps especially attached to your Majesty, to the Queen, and the Prince of Wales. And I look one day to have my own restored to me, when your Majesty's is restored to you."

Roger Egremont had never spoken with a royal personage until then; but he bore himself so as to win favor, and backed out of the room without tumbling over his own heels. Once outside, Berwick clapped him on the back, and whispered, —

"We must pay our respects to the gentlemen and ladies in waiting, and then for Madame Michot's; for I tell you that is the best place in St. Germain's after the King's bed-time!"

To this Roger responded with a wink. Three years' imprisonment and the loss of his estate had not taken all the savor out of life for him.

Berwick led him to a handsome saloon, but poorly lighted and indifferently heated, and half full of ladies

The House of Egremont

and gentlemen. A gentleman usher announced in a loud voice, flinging open the door, —

“The Duke of Berwick and Mr. Roger Egremont.”

Berwick entered, smiling and bowing right and left, and introducing Roger. The scene, which was really dull, seemed dazzling to Roger, long unused to assemblies of any kind. All the women seemed beautiful to his unaccustomed eyes, and his glance, wandering admiringly among them, fell upon a little weazened old lady, sitting in a great gilt chair at the top of the room. She was much painted and bewigged, and must once have been handsome; she still had a pair of black eyes, soft and flashing in spite of years. Behind her chair stood a small, cadaverous young man, very well dressed and extremely subdued in manner. And the old lady, catching sight of Berwick, screamed to him, in a voice and accent unmistakably English, —

“Come here, Berwick, and introduce that pretty fellow you have with you!”

Berwick bowed low, and whispered in Roger’s ear as they advanced, —

“Take care not to offend, for there is the loveliest girl of a niece;” and the next minute he was presenting Roger to Madame la Duchesse de Beaumanoir.

“Egremont?” repeated the old lady, giving him a small withered hand to kiss. “Are you the son of John Egremont, whom my Lady Castlemaine hated like poison?” — which she called pi’son.

“Yes, madam,” replied Roger. “My father ever hated Lady Castlemaine like the devil, and I presume it was returned in kind.”

“Hum,” she reflected; “your father was a sad dog. So are some of the other Egremonts here. Mr. Egre-

Roger Falls into Good Company

mont of Sandhills and his sons are, I understand, no better than common touts and gamesters."

"Madam," replied Roger, with great respect, "I did not come here to have my name abused. I sometimes take that liberty myself, but I can by no means allow it to any one else. So, if you wish me to stay, say not one word against the very worst of my family."

"I like your spirit, young man," replied Madame de Beaumanoir, "and, God knows, few young men have any spirit now. They are not as they were in the time of King Charles of blessed memory. *That* was a court for you, — no nonsense, like this one, about going to chapel, and every man tied to his wife's apron strings, and virtue and morality and fiddle-faddle. I was young then, and a fool, and married out of my own country; but sorry enough I was for it, — not that my husband was not a good man; oh, yes, too good. He was what they call a duke and peer of France; the people here of every condition think the world of 'em, and they think a good deal of themselves, God knows. However, I rank a French duke no better than an English duke — nor half so good. There's nothing in France half so good as it is in England, not even the court of the Grand Monarque, as he is called, — a little man he is too, after he has taken his great periwig and hat and feathers off. The French court is mighty different from Whitehall in the days of that angel Charles the Second."

"In what way, may I ask, madam?" inquired Roger, with an air of the deepest interest.

"In this way," replied Madame de Beaumanoir, whipping out a gold snuff-box, which she offered Roger. "'Tis more serious at the French court. No one dares contradict the King; and there is a way they have of

The House of Egremont

putting people in prison, — *lettres de cachet* they call it, — which shuts their mouths pretty effectually. But with blessed King Charles, we could be as impudent as we pleased, we freeborn Britons, and even this poor old King James, in his gay days, — for I can tell you, he was once as gay as you please, for all his pious long face and tiresome prayers, — he never revenged himself on a lady, nor a gentleman neither. I think from your looks you would have shone at the court of King Charles,” the old lady suddenly added.

“A million thanks, madam,” cried Roger, bowing to the ground.

“I have not seen my country for thirty-nine years,” continued Madame de Beaumanoir, “but I thank God I am as English as the day I left it. I was preparing to return, — my husband, poor man, was dead and buried, and I had my affairs in order, and a good sum of money, and nothing to keep me here, being minded to take my niece Michelle with me, — when this cursed revolution came about; and the court came to me, instead of my going to the court. ’Tis a monstrous dull court, forever praying and forgiving their enemies, and too moral by half. There’s Berwick — a pretty fellow, with a good wit, but I assure you he is not half the man Sir Charles Sedley was, or Rochester, or any of King Charles’s men. I hope you may enliven us a bit.”

“I will do my endeavors, madam,” answered Roger, “but remember, I have had no king like King Charles of blessed memory to model myself upon.”

“I know it,” sighed the old lady, “but you’ll do your best. Now, here is my grand-nephew, François Delaunay; when I sent for him from Languedoc, to *live with me* and perhaps be my heir, he was the most

Roger Falls into Good Company

strait-laced little rascal you ever saw. He was perpetually going to church and I verily believe the creature had never been drunk in his life. When I would send for him to come and tell me some merry tales, he would be reading his Bible or his meditations, or some fol-de-rol. And when we had a little innocent lansquenet, the fellow actually had the impudence to tell me he had scruples about venturing money on cards! 'Scruples!' said I very loud, for I talk loud when I'm vexed, 'I know what you mean. I have 'em too. I have scruples about leaving a livre of my money to a white-livered little lady of a man, who has not the spirit of a chicken nor anything about him that marks a man of quality.' You should have seen the change it made in my little man; the hope of money is a great reformer. I made him learn English so he could speak it drunk or sober; and I have driven him now, until he can drink and swear and play like other gentlemen."

Every word of this was heard by the luckless François, and he turned, with a good-natured, sheepish grin on his face, toward Roger.

"Madam," said Roger, impudently taking Madame de Beaumanoir's small hand, and holding it while he again helped himself to snuff out of her box, "I envy Mr. François Delaunay, and I will do what I can toward completing the education you have so auspiciously begun. I will take him, this very night, to the inn of Michot—a monstrous pleasant place, as you know."

"Yes, I know," cackled the old lady. "You are a comely, saucy fellow, not unworthy the company of my ever dear and blessed King Charles. I must make you known to my niece. She is a taking baggage. No great beauty, although they say she is, but with all

The House of Egremont

the life in her that her cousin François lacks. She is not here to-night."

And then Roger, who was amused by the old lady, felt a strange and strong dislike to this niece of whom both Berwick and Madame de Beaumanoir had spoken, and made up his mind that he would hate her.

Presently Berwick came after him, and he talked with many ladies and gentlemen, and midnight found them at the inn of Michot. They had a rollicking night. Dicky was there, and he sang and fiddled with gayety of heart. And François was there, brought by Roger, in conformity with his promise to Madame de Beaumanoir. At first, François affected the swashbuckler, the rake, and the wine-bibber, but when the wine was in the truth was out, with poor François, and leaning his head on his hand he complained bitterly, to the ungodly merriment of the rest.

"Shentlemen, you ought to pity me — tha'sh you ought. I am by nature a pioussh man, shentlemen; I don't like caroushin' an' drinkin'. I wanted to be a Calvinist minishter, an' read golly books," — François meant godly books, — "but tha' devilish old woman saysh she don't like golly men — likesh 'em rakish — won't leave me a crown if I lead a golly life, an' acshilly forcesh me to drink an' swear an' play. But I'll dishappoint her yet. As soon as I'm my own man, I'll be a Calvinist minishter and lead a golly life; no more drinkin' an' shwearin', — all golliness."

Roger and Berwick put him on horseback and sent him home at daylight very drunk still, according to their promise to Madame de Beaumanoir.

CHAPTER V

THE EASTER TUESDAY MASQUERADE ON THE TERRACE, AND WHAT CAME OF IT

ROGER EGREMONT had reached St. Germain's on the verge of Passion Week. Then followed Holy Week and its austerities, which were closely observed at the old palace, but not quite so much so at the inn of Michot, except indeed by Dicky Egremont. Dicky would neither play nor sing during that time, and went to church so early and so often, and fasted so long, that his usually rosy face grew quite thin and pallid. Roger went through with such pious practices as he conceived a gentleman and a Christian and an Egremont should, and fasted on Good Friday, and kneeled down with Berwick and others in the muddy street when the sacred processions passed; but his mind was much set upon the glories of Easter Week, and especially upon that great Easter Tuesday masquerade on the terrace, when all of St. Germain's, and half of Paris turned out to dance and sing and jest, in masks, when kings and queens and princes and princesses made a part of the pageant, and the Grand Monarque himself was not above showing himself to his loyal subjects. Roger heard much talk at the palace about the coming festival. He now regularly attended in the King's antechamber, having been appointed one of his Majesty's secretaries, in addition to

The House of Egremont

being in the corps of gentlemen-at-arms. For the clerkly handwriting Roger had acquired in Newgate gaol recommended him — to his sorrow — for the place of secretary.

On the night before the masquerade Roger was at the levee at the palace, and all the talk was of the next day's festival. Even Berwick, the Pike — tall, thin, silent, dignified Berwick — was almost enthusiastic over it. A group was gathered around the meagre fire in the great saloon — for all the fires in the palace were meagre — in which stood Berwick and Roger. They had become good friends, and Berwick, in some sort, had adopted Roger, even giving him a handsome dress-sword, as Roger had none, as a sort of warlike *gage d'amour*.

Presently a commotion was heard. Madame de Beaumanoir, accompanied by her ever faithful and obedient François Delaunay, fluttered into the room and up to the fireplace. Berwick placed a chair for her. Roger Egremont picked up her fan, her handkerchief, and her snuff-box, all of which she dropped in succession, and mightily tickled the old lady by gravely proposing that he should sit on the floor by her chair, so as to be ready to hand her such impedimenta as she might let fall.

"Oh, you darling rogue!" she cried. "Such impudence as I see in your eye! I love an impudent man! So, among you saucy, raking fellows, you sent François Delaunay home to me, t'other night, the worse for liquor! I am a thousand times obliged to you. He has been more human ever since, and less like a cross between a Trappist monk and a Calvinist minister. Did you do your part in filling him up, my lord duke?"

"*Madam*," replied Berwick, "I obeyed your com-

The Easter Tuesday Masquerade

mands in that particular as far as I could, and if Mr. Delaunay does not turn out a villainous rake, 't will not be my fault or Mr. Roger Egremont's. May I ask if that beauteous niece of yours, Mademoiselle de Orantia will grace the masquerade to-morrow?"

"Oh, Lord, no!" replied Madame de Beaumanoir. "She stays at home, — what for, think you? To read a volume of new plays by that low fellow, Molière. 'T is true, the French King sent them to her by M. de Senécý, with a letter — a letter, mind you. And this is not the first, for when I asked her the minx replied as coolly as you please, 'Madam, the King has honored me three times before with letters.'"

"Very reprehensible of his Majesty," responded Berwick.

"Reprehensible! Idiot that you are! The greatest honor in the world! When I got a letter from that angel King Charles, did I keep it from the world? Not I, but blazoned it abroad, so that those hussies, the Duchess of Portsmouth and the Castlemaine woman, were ready to cut my throat. But I dare say," added the old lady, with an air of mild retrospection, "the letters were somewhat different from what my niece gets from the French King. He has grown monstrous proper since that snivelling old Maintenon has got him under her thumb."

"'T is said," continued Berwick, "that the King of France designs the Princess Michelle for a great marriage. You know, madam, one must go from home to hear news of one's family."

"Very likely," replied Madame de Beaumanoir, "and my niece is the very woman for it. Michelle has the worst combination that ever the devil devised for a woman: she has love and ambition in a high degree.

The House of Egremont

God made those two qualities, but the devil mixed 'em. 'Tis well enough to have one. I had ambition, but with no nonsense about love; the Queen, on the contrary, can love, and would give up the throne of the universe for that poor doddering old —”

“Madam! Madam!” cried Roger, raising his hand. Berwick colored, but remained silent.

“I 'an't said it,” replied Madame de Beaumanoir, with a wink of her bright eyes. “I say, though, that my niece knows not what she will be at. She can marry a princeling if she wants to, being herself what they call a princess of the Holy Roman Empire. God knows what any woman wants with any sort of man but a good, gallant, fighting, drinking, swearing Englishman, — but my lady has the bee of a great marriage in her bonnet. At the same time she hopes and expects, and certainly will love like a hurricane; and you will see what comes of it. I have lived long and much, having been, as you know, at the court of blessed King Charles, but never saw I the woman who was swayed this way by love and that way by ambition, who did not have vast vicissitudes in love and life.”

Roger, not being prepared with an opinion on this point, held his tongue; but Madame de Beaumanoir continued with an increased vigor, —

“Michelle is reckoned a beauty. She is not; but she is one of those women who befool the world into thinking them extraordinary handsome, and then proceed to befool it in every other way. She is over fond of reading and writing and wandering in sequestered places, and riding far and fast, with François only for an escort. And she affects old men and ecclesiastics, and thinks about things that no young and handsome *girl need think about*. However,” the old lady abruptly

The Easter Tuesday Masquerade

concluded, "all this is nothing to you — for my Princess regards a commoner, albeit he is an English gentleman who dates back to the Saxon heptarchy, very much as you regard any humble creature who serves you, but who is as far below you as the steeple of St. Denis is above the earth."

"Or as I regard Bess Lukens," thought Roger, not much interested in all Madame de Beaumanoir had said. Just then the old lady caught sight of François, sitting a little off in a corner with a book which he had taken out of his breast pocket, and reaching over, Madame de Beaumanoir brought her fan down on his luckless head with a whack.

"That's for reading sermons in company," cried this terrible old lady. "You never see Berwick or this pretty fellow Egremont reading sermons, do you?"

"'Tis a volume of Queen Margaret's 'Heptameron,' replied François, in an injured voice, — "the very naughtiest book I could find in Paris!"

This mollified the old Duchess, and she returned to the charge with Berwick, who seemed to relish her society. Roger Egremont noted that the old lady, after all, was a person of extreme shrewdness of apprehension, and not in any way bad at heart. But every word he had heard of this Princess Michelle had set him against her, and he felt not the slightest curiosity to see her.

The levee was not late that night, all being eager for the next day's festivity, and by sunrise next morning, Roger, in his attic at the inn, which he shared with Dicky, was wakened by the merry clamor in the streets of the little town.

Both of them rose and dressed quickly, for Dicky

The House of Egremont

had a black calamanco domino, made for him by Madame Michot's kind fingers, in which he proposed to see the masquerade, as he expressed it.

"You mean, to take part in it with your fiddle," said Roger, laughing. "I thought, Dicky boy, your piety would not last. But what will your superiors say to this?"

Dicky's face grew a yard long.

"I don't know," he said. "They let us do pretty much as we like when we are out of the seminary for any reason — such as I am now. But surely they know that I love music and dancing and innocent gayety; and there's no great harm in a domino. But one thing thou knowest, Roger, — I will not do anything unbecoming a gentleman."

"Indeed you will not, my honest little Dicky," cried Roger; "and so, put on your domino and take your fiddle and go and spend the day merrily and innocently; and if you never do any greater harm than that, you will have a shining page in the book of all men's actions!"

Roger went forth himself, at first unmasked, to see the sights. At three o'clock the French King would arrive, to make with the King and Queen of England a grand promenade along the terrace; and the gentlemen-at-arms of King James would be paraded before the palace gates to receive the great King who clothed and fed them. But until then, Roger was his own master, and he used his liberty to walk briskly about, exercising his awkward French as well as his legs, in the crowded town, the great forest, alive with people, and the noble terrace, already a panorama of delight, and was charmed and delighted with all he saw.

By noon the terrace — that glorious spot, where Art,

The Easter Tuesday Masquerade

taking Nature by the hand, showed her how to beautify herself still more — was a mass of life and color. The April sun shone with the golden radiance of the springtime. The trees were in their first fresh livery of green, and the delicate and piercing odors of young leaves filled the soft air. Two hundred feet below the sheer descent of the stone parapet, lay the grassy meadows flecked with groves and thickets, through which the silver Seine ran joyfully. To-day the river glittered in the sunlight. Many boats were borne upon its bosom, — for Paris poured out her legions of sight-seers by the water as by the highway. Yonder lay the decorated barge of some grand seigneur who chose to make a water-party for the fête. Ladies and cavaliers were stepping out lightly, laughing and chattering, and tripping gayly toward the great flight of two hundred stone steps, that led to the pavilion of Henry the Fourth. As they climbed, they stopped to rest upon the stone benches placed on the platforms, and watched the surging stream of humanity — all sorts and conditions of men — toiling up to the level of the terrace. Next the nobleman's water party came a group of young workmen from Paris, in a market-gardener's boat. They wore their working-clothes, and stared with impudent admiration at the great ladies, as yet unmasked, resting on the benches, who by no means resented the liberty. Then came a whole company of washerwomen, in their spotless caps and fichus, who on reaching the top of the vast stairs immediately began dancing to a pipe and tabor that played away merrily for the few pence tossed them. Thousands of feet that day trod those stone steps, and other thousands made the great forest alive, and raised clouds of dust along the highways; for all roads led to St.

The House of Egremont

Germaines on Easter Tuesday. Music resounded, — fiddles and flutes and horns, alone and in unison. Here might be seen a group of peasant girls dancing, with a gentleman or two, masked but not disguised, taking a merry fling with them. Yonder a couple of ecclesiastics, in black cassocks and shovel hats, gravely surveyed the scene. The streets of the town were choked with coaches and with horses fantastically appalled, as became their masked riders. Servants lounged about, eating, drinking, gaping at what they saw, and occasionally fighting for precedence. These encounters, however, were generally settled by the combatants retiring abashed under the jeers and jokes of the bystanders; for it was a good-natured crowd, which came for its day's fun and would by no means be balked of it. Beggars there were too, in plenty, but even these were jolly fellows on that day, for their gains were considerable, and they were tolerably sure of a full stomach and wine in plenty. The day wore on merrily, and over the noisy, frolicking town and the placid green meadows below it — deserted for once, because from the low-lying fields nothing could be seen — shone the spring sun, and whispered the spring breezes.

At two o'clock there was a commotion huger than any which had preceded it. The King of France had arrived with a vast suite. The cavalcade rattled through the town to the gateway of the château, and into the courtyard. The Grand Monarque descended statelily from his great gilt coach. In the next coach behind him was the lady described by Madame de Beaumanoir, as "that snivelling old Maintenon," and behind her was the mob of the greatest people in France, who found it to their interest to dog the heels and hang on to *the petticoats* of the astute widow of Scarron. Madame

The Easter Tuesday Masquerade

de Maintenon wore a very haughty air until, after leaving her coach, she followed the wake of the Grand Monarque, and made obeisance to Mary Beatrice of England; when in the presence of that gentle and queenly woman, she assumed a look of great meekness, not to say abjectness, being awed in the presence of true majesty.

The King and Queen of England, with the little Prince of Wales, received their brother of France at the foot of the staircase, and the royalties solemnly embraced and kissed. Roger Egremont, who watched it all from his place in the corps of gentlemen-at-arms drawn up in the courtyard, made up his mind speedily about the Grand Monarque. He looked and walked and spoke the king, every inch of him, and was surely the politest man and the finest gentleman in the world. But whether he was really as great as he appeared to be — that was something else. Roger's pride, however, was gratified by seeing the showing his own King and Queen, poor and exiled, made in the presence of the royal brother who gave them bread and kept them from beggary. James Stuart was a gentleman, like all his race, whatever might be their faults, and Mary Beatrice of Modena well deserved the praise bestowed upon her by Louis the Fourteenth, as the most royal of all the royal women he had ever known.

The royal party ascended the stairs to the apartments above for rest and refreshment, — a little breath of informality and retirement, only involving the presence of about two hundred of the greatest personages in the kingdom. The corps of gentlemen-at-arms was dismissed. Roger ran to a cupboard in the garret of the château, where he had placed his domino when called upon to take his place in the ranks, and quickly disguising himself,

The House of Egremont

made fast for the crowd that surged about the château. The first person he ran across was a little figure in a gay scarlet domino, laced with silver, whom he had no difficulty in identifying as Madame de Beaumanoir. The old lady was as sprightly and active as the youngest, and François, who toiled behind her, had some difficulty in keeping up with her. She promptly accosted Roger, as he was walking toward the terrace, and he knew well enough what to say.

"Do I know you, madam? Certainly I do, but I would not be so ungallant as to betray a lady when she wishes to remain *inconnue*. I know, however, that you have a little, little hand, that you use a gold snuff-box, and that you love the English."

"Oh, you delightful rascal, I know you. Is Berwick in attendance to-day?"

"Yes, madam; he is to escort the Prince of Wales."

"You know what these French call Berwick?"

"Yes, madam, — the Pike, because he is so tall and straight."

"Ah, but they have another name for him. 'That great tall devil of an Englishman,' they call him; and —"

A fanfare of silver trumpets cleft the golden April noon, and the King of France, with the Queen of England upon his arm, appeared under the gloomy archway of the château, leading the procession of royalties toward the terrace. Louis the Fourteenth was still Louis le Grand, although slightly tottering upon those royal legs of his, encased in crimson-satin knee-breeches with diamond buckles. He could still make the most magnificent bow in the world, his plumed hat sweeping the ground, and the April sun shining on his vast pow-

The Easter Tuesday Masquerade

dered periwig. And he could still show that splendid deference to Mary Beatrice which no man ever showed so much to his poor relations of England as did Louis the Fourteenth. As for that sweet and noble lady, she appeared queenly, even by the side of the Grand Monarque. Her regal bearing was softened by an exquisite feminine softness, and she looked the fond wife and tender mother she was, striving to interest poor, sad, dispirited King James, who walked on the other side of her, and casting back affectionate glances at the pretty little four-year-old Prince of Wales, who clung to Berwick's hand. It was plain to see why the Queen of England should love this half-brother of her son, for Berwick showed in every expression of his noble face the affection he felt for the young Prince, while the child himself evinced the utmost fondness for Berwick.

A brilliant suite of French and English court people followed the royal party as they proceeded toward the pavilion of Henry the Fourth, and then turned to traverse the whole length of the terrace. They walked along the drive-way, which had been beautifully swept and watered, and laid with a gorgeous red carpet. At every two hundred yards sixty powdered lackeys ran, and taking up the strip of carpet just passed over laid it ahead of the strip upon which the royal people were then treading. The promenade both on the right and left was crowded with people, some venturesome spirits standing outside the iron railing and clinging to it, that they might see the grand procession without being crushed. On the other side, where the great trees, cut flat as green pasteboard, made a wall, another vast crowd surged. Cheers and vivas resounded, to which King Louis and King James responded as became

The House of Egremont

made fast for the crowd that surged about the château. The first person he ran across was a little figure in a gay scarlet domino, laced with silver, whom he had no difficulty in identifying as Madame de Beaumanoir. The old lady was as sprightly and active as the youngest, and François, who toiled behind her, had some difficulty in keeping up with her. She promptly accosted Roger, as he was walking toward the terrace, and he knew well enough what to say.

"Do I know you, madam? Certainly I do, but I would not be so ungallant as to betray a lady when she wishes to remain *inconnue*. I know, however, that you have a little, little hand, that you use a gold snuff-box, and that you love the English."

"Oh, you delightful rascal, I know you. Is Berwick in attendance to-day?"

"Yes, madam; he is to escort the Prince of Wales."

"You know what these French call Berwick?"

"Yes, madam, — the Pike, because he is so tall and straight."

"Ah, but they have another name for him. 'That great tall devil of an Englishman,' they call him; and —"

A fanfare of silver trumpets cleft the golden April noon, and the King of France, with the Queen of England upon his arm, appeared under the gloomy archway of the château, leading the procession of royalties toward the terrace. Louis the Fourteenth was still Louis le Grand, although slightly tottering upon those royal legs of his, encased in crimson-satin knee-breeches with diamond buckles. He could still make the most magnificent bow in the world, his plumed hat sweeping the ground, and the April sun shining on his vast pow-

The Easter Tuesday Masquerade

dered periwig. And he could still show that splendid deference to Mary Beatrice which no man ever showed so much to his poor relations of England as did Louis the Fourteenth. As for that sweet and noble lady, she appeared queenly, even by the side of the Grand Monarque. Her regal bearing was softened by an exquisite feminine softness, and she looked the fond wife and tender mother she was, striving to interest poor, sad, dispirited King James, who walked on the other side of her, and casting back affectionate glances at the pretty little four-year-old Prince of Wales, who clung to Berwick's hand. It was plain to see why the Queen of England should love this half-brother of her son, for Berwick showed in every expression of his noble face the affection he felt for the young Prince, while the child himself evinced the utmost fondness for Berwick.

A brilliant suite of French and English court people followed the royal party as they proceeded toward the pavilion of Henry the Fourth, and then turned to traverse the whole length of the terrace. They walked along the drive-way, which had been beautifully swept and watered, and laid with a gorgeous red carpet. At every two hundred yards sixty powdered lackeys ran, and taking up the strip of carpet just passed over laid it ahead of the strip upon which the royal people were then treading. The promenade both on the right and left was crowded with people, some venturesome spirits standing outside the iron railing and clinging to it, that they might see the grand procession without being crushed. On the other side, where the great trees, cut flat as green pasteboard, made a wall, another vast crowd surged. Cheers and vivas resounded, to which King Louis and King James responded as became

The House of Egremont

gentlemen, bowing to the right and left, while Mary Beatrice smiled that gracious and lovely smile which won all hearts. The little Prince of Wales, trotting by Berwick's side and holding his hand, waved his little hat and feathers gayly; and when he grew tired, and was taken up in Berwick's arms, the delight of the people was extreme. Honest bourgeoisie that they were, they liked this simple and natural family affection, and were not afraid to show their liking.

Midway the terrace is a huge semicircular alcove, set around with the flat-cut trees, and beautifully green with mossy grass. Here were placed three gilded chairs for the King of France and King and Queen of England. Numbers of other seats were arranged around the semicircle, for the other members of the royal family and their suites, and from this lovely spot, overlooking that fair valley — the steeple of St. Denis in view, much to the distaste of the Grand Monarque — these great ones of the earth watched the masquerade. The motley procession promptly appeared. Coaches were in plenty. Phoebus, driving his unruly horses, came first, in the gilded chariot of the sun. The four seasons followed, — the last the ice-king in his snow-covered sleigh. Knights and crusaders on horseback and in armor, ladies mounted on palfreys, Circassian beauties veiled from the gaze of men, peasant women, who wore jewels upon their bodices, — all the gay mumery of a court bent on displaying itself in public. It was two hours in passing the royal party, and the afternoon shadows had come before the procession was over. Their Majesties returned to the château, and then gentle and simple, courtier and shopkeeper mingled together in a grand revel. The music clashed louder. Anybody *danced who would*. Couples slipped away from the

The Easter Tuesday Masquerade

shouting, singing rush of revellers to the shady recesses of the forest, and were not missed — or, if missed, were not sought for. Wine flowed freely, coming from no one knew where. The masquerade grew wild, uproarious, and Roger Egremont, his natural gayety taking delight in such things, grew wild and uproarious too. But in the midst of a dance, whirling around with his strong arm the light form of a girl dressed as a gypsy, whose white hand belied her, one of those sudden revulsions of feeling which wait on all who know how to feel beset him. He threw his partner aside with mock courtesy, his soul revolted at her paint and powder. He cast off his domino, and rolling it up into a ball, kicked it as far as his heel could make it go. He had suddenly enough of revelling, he hated the masquerade then because it had ceased to amuse him; it was all foreign, French, alien to him. He could not act a part long or well. He yearned for quiet and for green fields, and fled from the music and chatter and loud laughter as if they were pestilent. He looked down at the meadows below the terrace. Nothing could be more silent or peaceful. The river was full of boats moored to the banks, but no one was in them. He saw not a solitary person in those deserted fields two hundred feet below him.

He walked quickly to the farther end of the terrace, by which he could walk down the steep slope to the meadow. The masquerade seemed increasing in noise and wildness as he passed along, — the shouts, the screams of laughter, the blare of music, the loud echoes of song, — but it only drove Roger the quicker away from it. His rapid walk soon brought him to the farther end of the terrace, and he fairly ran down to the steep hillside, toward those still and silent meadows basking in the

The House of Egremont

sunlight. Once he looked back and saw the whole scene silhouetted against the blue sky, and he recognized easily, on the corner of the terrace, a short, lithe figure in a black domino, dancing nimbly with a fiddle in his hand accompanying the clashing of a pipe and tambourine. Roger laughed and was glad ; it was good to see such honest, innocent mirth as Dicky's.

He soon found himself more than a mile from the château, and at a stile that led into a sweet meadow that bordered the brink of the quiet river. For the last quarter of an hour he had not seen a human being, or heard the sound of a human voice. It was about five o'clock, and the afternoon sun still shone golden fair. Between the meadows and the glittering river was an irregular hedge of ancient and thorny rose-bushes, turning faintly green in their brown. The shadows were growing long by that time, and dappled the fresh young grass. Nothing broke the silence but the occasional echo of a bird-song in the woods close by. It was so sweet and peaceful — it was so like Egremont, Roger thought, for that was his standard of comparison — that he was melted by the pleasure and the pain of it. He sat down on the ground, under the rose trees, and before he knew it he had fallen into a soft and shallow sleep, full of airy dreams. He knew not how long he slept, but he was awakened by the consciousness of some one near him. Whether it was in his dream, or whether he saw it, he could not tell, — but a girl's light step was close to him, and soft eyes looked down on him for one moment. So strong was this feeling that as soon as he opened his eyes he looked about him for the lady of his dream ; and there she was, on the other side of the rose tree, her graceful head half turned away from him, tiptoeing on one dainty, satin-shod foot, and

The Easter Tuesday Masquerade

reaching upward after something just above her hand. Her gown was of a pale, jocund yellow, and in the hand that hung by her side she held a large hat. The sun shone on her black hair, unprofaned by powder, and tied with only a black ribbon ; her eyes were very dark, with long black lashes, and her complexion of a kind of rosy pallor, like the first sky of morning. There was something of the dawn and the dew in her speaking face. And at the first glance that Roger Egremont had of her a flash of light and life passed into his soul and took possession of it. The Great Usurper had come into his kingdom, had overset in one moment of time all that had been there before, and without so much as saying, "By your leave," or "Is it a convenient season?" had set up his rule and sceptre.

Roger, as wide-awake as the sun at noonday, rose quickly to his feet. The lady of his dream was on the other side of the rose-tree then, but he could see her plainly, and above the faint twittering of a bird in the bough above him, he heard the silken rustle of her skirt as she moved, still trying to touch something beyond her reach ; and the something was a long piece of filmy lace that the heedless wind had carried high up on the rose tree. Roger walked around the other side of the bush, and bowing low, hat in hand, as when he bowed to the Queen, said, —

"Madam, permit me," and carefully disentangling the lace, handed it to her with another bow.

"I thank you very much," she said, curtseying deeply. "I should have lost my lace but for you. 'T is my custom, like many ladies who reside near here, to wash and bleach my laces in this sunny meadow in the springtime. And this day, being sure that few, if any, persons would be here, I brought my treasures. I

The House of Egremont

feared I should lose this piece, which you have so kindly rescued for me."

Her voice had a reed-like sweetness, and there was in her manner a kind of haughty ease and graceful arrogance. She was, indeed, so perfectly composed that a horrid thought entered Roger's mind: she might be married! She looked to be about twenty years of age. Both had spoken in English, but Roger at once detected a slight foreign accent in her speech.

"The quiet here is very sweet, after the noise and brawling of the town and the terrace," he said boldly, determined not to let her depart without a word. "I too knew this meadow would not be much frequented to-day, and so I came; and the quietness and the sweetness put me to sleep."

She smiled quite broadly at this, and without the least embarrassment replied, —

"I saw you sleeping, and stepped as carefully as I could; the rustle of my gown was very near you."

"I knew it," coolly replied Roger; "I felt it in my sleep."

My lady was by no means disconcerted at this daring speech, but was rather amused at it. Something in her manner, without the least rudeness, indicated superiority. and this secretly nettled Roger, who thereupon put something in the tone of his voice and the glance of his eye that indicated perfect equality.

"Did you not see the masquerade, madam?" he asked.

"No," replied my lady, "I have seen many masquerades, — and besides, I had letters to write, and books to read, and laces to wash."

Roger knew enough of the world, and in particular of the French world, to feel certain that only a very

The Easter Tuesday Masquerade

great lady, or else a woman of a very humble class, would so talk with a stranger.

"I, madam, might have found letters to write and books to read, though I have no laces to wash. But I had never before seen a masquerade. I have been three years in prison, for loyalty to my King, James Stuart, and in all those three years I had not once breathed God's free air, or trod this green earth of ours; and to be once more my own man, free to see, to walk, to speak, to mix with crowds at will, was so sweet to me that I thirsted for this masquerade. Then I wearied of it."

"Yes," replied my lady, "I have often noted that the way to cure a man of a liking for anything is to give him all that he wants, and more, of it. 'T will cure you of something more than a taste for masquerades."

Roger opened his eyes a little wider at this sharpness of wit. When and how and where and for what purpose had this rose-lipped girl observed men so closely?

"Thank you, madam, for those words of wisdom; I shall ever remember them," he replied with a low bow; "and all that I ask of Fate is at least to try me with giving me exactly what I want in life. So far the jade has given me all I did not want. In this world a man must be hammer or anvil, pestle or mortar, bellows or fire. I have ardently desired to be the hammer, the pestle, the bellows; but Fate has made me the anvil, the mortar, the fire."

"No matter what we want in life," replied my lady, gently and graciously, "there are but three things of which we may be certain, — work, pain, death."

These words, so calmly uttered by this fair woman, in that place and at that time, came like a dash of cold water to Roger Egremont. He repeated to himself

The House of Egremont

under his breath the three words, — “work, pain, death;” and my lady watched him narrowly. He saw in her black eyes deep melancholy, despite her smiling mouth. An old superstition flashed into his mind, that one’s fate was revealed in one’s eyes, and he saw many strange vicissitudes pictured in the soft splendor of those eyes.

“Madam,” he said, “that same thought was vaguely with me just now when I left the masquerade. If I be not too free, does it not seem as if we had been this day thinking the same thoughts? And, strangely, — but, after all, not strangely, — we meet, we speak together. Do you remember, madam, how the Seine and the Aube meet at Pont-le-Roi? They have flowed apart for leagues and leagues and leagues, but they flowed apart only to meet at last at Pont-le-Roi. I mean this solely of our thoughts, madam,” he hastily added, seeing a danger signal in the lighting up of her eyes and a faint drawing away of her silken skirts. “Pray pardon me if I am bold of speech, — but I am so lately out of prison, so new to the society of my kind —” he continued, with the humblest manner in the world, as he could well afford, having spoken his mind precisely as he wished.

“I believe, sir,” replied my lady, “that you were bold of speech before ever you were in prison, and you will be bold of speech if you never see prison walls again.”

At which Roger chose to laugh, treating it rather as a witticism than a rebuke.

“At least pardon an exile, madam, and pray for me, that I may once more be with my own King in my own country, on my own estate, with my own roof over me, *my own horse* under me, and my own sky above me.”

The Easter Tuesday Masquerade

By which he wished to convey that he was a gentleman of condition.

"What!" cried the lady, "is not France good enough for you?"

"France, madam, is the best country in the world — except England. France is close to me, like my coat, but England is my shirt — nay, more, it is my skin."

"I am half English too," she replied, and then, Roger uttering an exclamation and advancing a step, she withdrew a little and making a deep curtsy, said, —

"Sir, I bid you good evening."

"Madam, your most obedient," was Roger's reply, with all courtliness.

She turned and followed a path that led through the meadows, and into the pleasure grounds of a château whose windows gleamed through the budding trees as the western sun touched them. In an instant her identity was revealed to Roger Egremont; she was the Princess de Orantia, and the château, toward which she walked with a step as light as a breeze, was the château of Madame de Beaumanoir!

Roger stood still, watching Michelle's slight figure as it disappeared, and then looking at the spot where she had been. In the mossy earth beside him, he saw the imprint of her dainty satin shoes; he stood gazing before him, and her voice was still in his ear, and the air was full of the faint perfume which exhaled from her robe. He asked himself innumerable questions about her. Was she really beautiful? What he meant was to ask if she were captivating. To that he could answer yes; but as for regular beauty — she suggested it, and had, certainly, a fine air and beautiful black eyes, but he could say in truth he had seen many handsomer women. For real beauty of form and color she could

The House of Egremont

not be matched in any way against Bess Lukens; the gaoler's niece was far and away beyond the daughter of the Holy Roman Empire. But, fiercely as he might fight, he could not drive that usurping passion out. He had seen Bess Lukens daily for three years, and loved her well, and yet he had held the empire of his soul against her. And here came this slender, haughty, prettyish girl, and he was lost — lost — lost for evermore!

The way in which Roger took this was as every courageous man takes the inevitable, in love, in war, in all things. He had, at the first glance, fallen deeply in love with a woman who esteemed herself far above him; and this was truly a great catastrophe, and one upon which he had not reckoned. But it was to be borne as becomes a man, — silently, unflinchingly, and debonairely. So he walked about on the river's edge until the April twilight fell, and the people who came by boat from Paris had trooped down to the landing near the town, and the boats filled with revellers were gliding past on the bosom of the dark water. There was still singing and shouting and laughter and the twanging of stringed instruments, but it was all softened by the distance and the mellow twilight glow, and melted sweetly into the far away as the boats threaded the windings of the river.

Roger wanted solitude then. He made a wide detour, which led him past the great iron gates which opened into the park of the Château de Beaumanoir. He had often caught glimpses in his walk about St. Germain, in the fortnight he had been there, of this château, — a stately place, with three marble terraces. He had never accepted Madame de Beaumanoir's pressing invitations to visit her; he knew not exactly why, except

The Easter Tuesday Masquerade

that, cast as he was, fresh from prison and loneliness, into the seething caldron of St. Germain's as it was then, with its thousands of exiles, English, Scotch, and Irish, he had scarcely got his bearings. Only the night before, the thought had entered his mind that he would not go to the château Beaumanoir at all, so strong a distaste had he taken for this unknown Princess Michelle. But now — ah, how Fate deals in mountebank tricks! — he would go anywhere on earth and beyond to see those soft eyes once more, and to hear that delicious voice.

When he reached the town, at nightfall, he found the revelry still in full blast, and his mood having changed, he suddenly felt a passionate desire for movement, gayety, action. He saw a merry crowd dancing in the public square before the château, and took several flings with shop-keepers' daughters and farriers' wives, handsome jades in their holiday clothes. Nor was Roger Egremont the only gentleman who so amused himself; the grave Berwick, the Pike, was figuring away in the same rigadon with Roger, and winked solemnly at him when they changed partners. Roger's was a milliner's apprentice, and Berwick's was the buxom laundress who did his linen for him. They drank freely of the cheap wines sold in the booths, and ate pâtés of the itinerant vendor, whose stand was lighted by a single candle. When the last echo of merriment had died away Berwick and Roger repaired to the inn of Michot, when the evening was just beginning, at midnight. In the great common room was a roystering crowd of English, Scotch, and Irish gentlemen, carousing hugely, and giving much scandal to the sober French servants, who served them endless jorums of punch and apple-toddy. Even Madame Michot, who

The House of Egremont

was used to it, wondered at the amount of brandy and strong drinks consumed by her patrons. Captain Ogilvie, the Irish gentleman who made poetry, was there with a beautiful new song on their exile, which he had just composed. Every verse ended with the refrain, —

“But I shall return no more, my dear,
I shall return no more.”

There was much singing of this, and some tears were shed by gentlemen who had had too much punch and wanted more. Dicky Egremont was there of course, and led the singing and fiddling. Roger did his share of drinking as well as singing, but remained obstinately and perfectly sober, — a bad sign; for neither drink nor any other deviltry could drive away the picture of Michelle's face as she looked at him, smiling and interested, in his sleep in the green meadow. And when the sun was tipping the church spires with gold, and Roger tumbled into bed, hoping in sleep to forget that haunting vision, he only passed into a world of dreams where Michelle was ever before him.

It seemed to him as if he had scarcely slept half an hour, although in truth it was nearly noon, when he was waked by seeing Dicky, with a little portmanteau in his hand, standing by the bed.

“Roger,” said Dicky, “I am going back to the seminary at Clermont to-day. My eyes are not yet cured, but I know I am better off there than here, where I am perpetually singing and fiddling. 'Tis no life for a man to lead, and I mean to quit it.”

Roger blinked his eyes, heavy with sleep, and burst out laughing. Dicky was the same Dicky; it was the way at Egremont, — a pious morning always succeeded *a rollicking* night.

The Easter Tuesday Masquerade

"Very well, my lad," said he. "I shall miss thee; there is no one could miss thee more. But if you are better off leading a stricter life, I will not say one word to hold you back. At least wait until I am dressed, and can go a part of the way with you."

Roger dressed quickly, and, Dicky having already settled with Madame Michot, the two kinsmen set out toward Clermont. The town of St. Germain and the forest too were in dishabille after the orgy they had passed through; everything had a more or less day-after-the-ball air.

As the two Egremonts walked along, Roger was not in the least distraught, nor did he love Dicky one whit the less; but the whole world, including himself, had changed since the same hour the day before. He had not, at noon yesterday, met Michelle. They parted on the farther edge of the forest, Dicky saying, —

"Roger, if I could but go back to Egremont a priest, and live in my grandfather's cottage, and minister to the poor people in the village, and see you master of your own, if even for a single year, I would cheerfully go to gaol, and even to the gallows."

"You shall go to neither," cried Roger, warmly, "but one day, when the King returns, we shall go back in honor, and there will be no gaol for either of us, and no gallows for you."

Then they parted, and Dicky trudged merrily onward toward Clermont. He had no money to ride in the post-wagon nor would he take it from Roger — who, after buying himself some decent clothes, had ten pounds left of the fifty which William of Orange had given him in lieu of Egremont.

Roger trudged back, not merrily, to St. Germain. He thought, as he traversed the road he had so lately

The House of Egremont

trod with Dicky, how essentially manly and upright was the boy's character; for Roger still thought him, although all of twenty-two, a boy. And Dicky had in him, strongly, the spirit of self-sacrifice. Roger could not but note it in little things concerning their joint occupancy of Madame Michot's attic. Dicky quietly and silently gave Roger the best bed, the best of everything; rose at four o'clock in the morning without disturbing the sleeping Roger; looked after his comfort as tenderly as a woman, and offered what little money he had.

"Honest Dicky," thought Roger, "when I come into my own I will repay thee well."

But though he had spoken so confidently of coming into his own, he was by no means as sure of it when he had arrived at St. Germain's as when he was shut up in Newgate. The thought that, after all, he might not come into his own, nor might the King come into his own, staggered him; and he perceived with secret alarm that the certainty he had entertained up to the time he had left England had declined into a hope since he had arrived in France. And then that sweet vision of Michelle, which haunted him every sleeping and waking hour since he had met her, came back with gentle persistence; and he gave himself over to a revery full of delight and of pain.

It was Roger's duty, as one of the King's secretaries, to repair to him daily at four o'clock in the afternoon. And so four o'clock found him in the King's closet, writing away doggedly at the King's dictation; but the fair eyes of Mademoiselle d'Orantia came between him and the written page, and her voice so rang in his ears that he had more than once to ask the poor, patient *King* to repeat his words. He had done much writing

The Easter Tuesday Masquerade

for the King in the two weeks he had been at St. Germain, being the readiest man with his pen of all those about the palace; and James Stuart, like all exiled kings, thought to write himself back into his kingdom. This endless writing was very irksome to Roger, although he did his duty manfully in the matter. As he was essentially a man of action, it was the dearest hope of his heart to find something to do. He wanted to be fighting, to be riding, to be counselling about some daring deed. Instead, he found himself seated at a table, surrounded with paper, ink, and quills, where sometimes from early in the morning until late in the evening he drew up memorials for the King, and wrote prosy letters, and threshed over old straw, and concocted *pièces justificatives*, and did all the writing that an industrious incapable like James Stuart could find for him to do. It wearied him more on this sunny afternoon than it had ever done before. He even caught himself regretting that he had learned to write so fair a hand in Newgate gaol.

At last, however, his tiresome task was over; but it was candle-light by that time, and also time for supper to be served to the gentlemen-at-arms in a mess-room adjoining the Hall of Guards. Roger, although he had met the love of his life only the day before, and had unconditionally surrendered to her, was yet ravenously hungry, and thirsty too. As he passed out of the King's closet he met the devoted and beautiful young Queen of this elderly, unfortunate King, as she was going to the King. Roger bowed respectfully, and stood against the wall to let her pass. Instead of going on, she stopped and smiled sweetly on him, and said, —

“Why do you look so dejected, Mr. Egremont?”

The House of Egremont

Roger's vigilant eyes glanced around carefully to see that he could not be overheard, and then dropping on his knee, as royalty was addressed, he said, —

“Madam, it is because of the writing that the King gives me to do. Oh, Madam, when I came here, it was with the best will in the world to shed the last drop of my blood for the King and for your Majesty and the Prince of Wales; I did not think, though, I should be called upon to shed rivers of ink; I would rather it were the blood. As for the quills I have used up, there will be no more geese in France within a year if this keeps up. I hear that they are almost exterminated since I came here a fortnight ago. Would your Majesty think that I should lament I ever learned to write so good a hand? I assure your Majesty, until the Prince of Orange threw me into prison and robbed me of my estate, I wrote very ill. It is another grudge I owe the Prince of Orange, learning to write readily.”

“You wish me to speak to the King,” said the Queen, usually so grave, but now laughing.

“Madam, if you would be so good,” replied Roger; and the Queen passing on, he knew that he should not be called upon to use so many goose-quills in future.

He was not on duty that night, but hunger, which can exist along with the most devouring passion, drove him quickly to the mess-room, where he supped in jovial company. And immediately afterward he went upstairs to the state apartments, where the evening levee was held. He had not mentioned Michelle's name to any living human being, but his ears were wide open to hear of her.

A few ladies and gentlemen had already assembled, and the very next person who entered the room after *him* was the Duchess de Beaumanoir, with François

The Easter Tuesday Masquerade

trotting after her. Roger, who enjoyed high favor with the old lady, was immediately called to her side.

"So you recognized me at the masquerade, yesterday, Mr. Egremont; and how did you enjoy the show?"

"Vastly, madam," replied Roger, his heart palpitating. "I never saw anything like it before."

"Of course not. These French apes are mighty good at shows of all sorts. And when did you get to bed?"

"Just as the church clocks were striking six, madam."

"Good. This ridiculous little mollicoddle François had said his prayers and was in bed before midnight. Lord! That ever I should be afflicted with such a man in my family!"

"Madam," said poor François, with a feeble grin, "I was the worse for liquor yesterday—indeed I was!"

"No doubt," scoffed the old Duchess; "a bottle of cowslip wine would put you in bed for a week. Now, Mr. Egremont, I am giving a rout to-morrow night, and you must come. Have you no curiosity to meet my niece, Mademoiselle d'Orantia?"

"Madam, I have the greatest curiosity to meet Mademoiselle d'Orantia," Rogers replied, with all the sincerity in the world, bowing with his hand on his heart, "and I accept with the utmost gratitude your invitation."

"My niece was the only living human being in all these parts who was not at the masquerade. She remained at home, reading and writing, and then went to the meadows in the afternoon—and came back smiling, and said she had had an adventure. But she would not say what it was."

So Michelle and he had a secret between them. Roger was suddenly made happy by the thought.

All that evening and the next day he was in a dream.

The House of Egremont

A letter-bag from England had arrived, and in spite of his promise of release from so much writing, he, with three other secretaries, worked hard from early in the morning until sunset. And then Roger, more wearied with his day of writing than if he had walked or ridden a hundred miles, went back to the inn of Michot. He ate his supper in the common room, and then went to his attic under the eaves, and shaved and dressed himself carefully, having long been used to do without a servant. He wore his own hair, unpowdered, partly from vanity in his long and thickly curling chestnut locks, and partly from the want of a man-servant. His one suit was a gray and silver, bought in Paris, and his sword was the one given him by Berwick. His figure and air set off his dress, and he was not unmindful of his looks. He was wondering ruefully how he should get to the château, when a message came up that the Duke of Berwick awaited him in a coach. Roger went down, and stepped into the coach. Berwick was dressed with an elegant simplicity which nobly became him, and, like Roger, wore his own hair.

"I dare not present myself to the Duchess without you," he said laughing, as they rolled along the high-road toward the château. "The old lady does you the honor to class you with King Charles's men; and though I think she overrates you in that respect, she is monstrous anxious for your company, to improve François, so she told me. And then, you will have the chance of meeting that enchanting Princess d'Orantia."

"Is she so beautiful?" asked Roger, innocently.

"No, she is far more, she is enchanting. Some women are born for large destinies, and Mademoiselle d'Orantia is one of them. The King of France is a good judge of men and women, and it is known that

The Easter Tuesday Masquerade

his Majesty has said more than once that he may make a great destiny for Mademoiselle, for she can marry into any royal house in Europe, by virtue of her birth. It is thought that the King means to play her as a winning card with one of the Rhine principalities, to take it from the League; so this poor, dowerless girl, may yet walk next the Queen."

"And how does Mademoiselle take it?" asked Roger, in a cool voice, as if not much interested in what Berwick was telling him.

"Rapturously. She adores her country, and is readier to be sacrificed than was Jephthah's daughter. Unluckily, she wishes to love as well as to reign, and, as Madame de Beaumanoir says truly, the woman who is haled this way by love, and the other way by ambition, is marked for disaster. The Princess Michelle wishes all sorts of incompatible things,—to serve, as well as to love and to reign, to search both heaven and hell; and Fate, I fear, will oblige her in the matter."

They were now at the gates of the château, a pile of grayish stone, with three terraces falling in front, and many stiff shrubberies and formal flower-beds about it. Beyond these artificialities was a small but beautiful park, left in its wild loveliness, very much like an English park, for Madame de Beaumanoir was bound to have something English in her surroundings. The place lay to the left of the town and forest, on one of those natural plateaus which make the neighborhood of St. Germain so charming. It was much lighted up, and many liveried servants held flambeaux to assist the guests in alighting from their coaches. Berwick and Roger, entering, were ushered into a fine saloon on the first floor, at the top of which sat Madame de Beaumanoir, in a kind of state, for no one was behind her in

The House of Egremont

the assumption of rank on occasions. And standing near was Michelle. She bent her black eyes, under her delicate, straight, black brows, upon Roger, and smiled upon him without the least confusion; and he bowed to the ground, and felt within his breast the sad conviction that this woman, so far removed from him, was the woman he loved.

She said to him at once, —

“I have not forgot the favor you did me in the meadow.”

“You mean, madam, the favor you did me,” replied Roger. “I have been to that meadow many times before, but it seems to me as if I never truly saw it until the day before yesterday.”

“I like the meadow very much when we begin to make hay in it,” replied Michelle, smiling. “You must know that one merit of this place is, we have very simple pleasures, and one of them is to play at hay making, and to have a rivalry in making hay-cocks. I believe except the Duke of Berwick, I can make the handsomest hay-cock in France. I like my pleasures out-of-doors.”

“So do I,” cried Roger. “I think I scarcely spent a waking hour indoors, once in the week, until I was sent to prison by the Prince of Orange.”

“Then, if you stayed not indoors at all, how came you by your education,” asked the Princess, aptly: “for I hear you are so good a scholar that the King of England has taken you among his secretaries.”

“I fear I did not much apply myself until I was a prisoner in Newgate gaol,” replied Roger, blushing very much.

They were standing close by an open window, and in spite of the mellow light of wax candles, the young moon shone in softly upon them.

The Easter Tuesday Masquerade

"After all," said Michelle, "one can only *live* in the open. I often wish to know how it feels to sleep in the woods and fields, to rise and mount at dawn, on a good horse, with arms by my side, and all the work I had to do that day to be done under God's sun. In such a life I could live happy, and die with a quiet and joyful mind."

"I know what it is to sleep at the sign of the Shining Stars," said Roger. "I slept three nights, wrapped in my cloak, on the ground, when I was taken from Newgate. And though two of the nights I was blindfolded, I think I never slept more sweetly. The last night 't was not so easy, for from where I lay I could see my home, in which a bastard and a villain lived and throve."

Roger checked himself. "I forgot," he said; "I did not mean to take my injuries to walk, as our French friends say; I only meant to say how well I loved the out-of-doors. You look too young, and too fair and slim for that life."

"But I am not," replied Michelle. She was in truth, very young and slight, but Roger saw, in the depths of her eyes, a gleam of adventure.

"Perhaps because I am half English, I like the woods and fields better than houses. When we make journeys I ride a-horseback with François to take care of me, and my footboy mounted. Poor François would often stop and rest, but I like to gallop on under the stars, and follow the road by night, and wonder what will come of it. When the King goes back to England I want to ride with him and see the people, some shouting and rejoicing, and some scowling at him, with murder in their hearts. And if the latter, I would go up to them, and plead so with them that they would be throw-

The House of Egremont

ing up their hats for King James before the day was out."

"And may it come to pass that I ride in the same rank with you," said Roger, bowing low and smiling; but he scowled when she continued, somewhat unkindly, —

"The men at St. Germain's are always talking; why are they not acting? They are very brave over their cups, you hear their songs denouncing the Prince of Orange resounding through half the night, but they will never be able to sing that usurper out of England; you will have to drub him out if ever you get him out at all."

"Madam," said Roger, with the extreme politeness with which he always cloaked his anger toward women, — for love does not preclude anger by any means, and is rather its concomitant, — "you forget that I am one of those men at St. Germain's whom you revile."

The Princess blushed, and said in a voice that could have won forgiveness from an ogre, —

"Pray forgive me, but like you I am bold of speech;" and then they both laughed, and a glance flashed between them, — they remembered that first meeting in the meadow.

So strong was the spell which Michelle cast over him that he would not willingly have left her side, but he was forced to remember his manners by her leaving him. And then the old Duchess called him, and proceeded to tell, in a loud voice, a very scandalous escapade in which his father had been engaged before Lady Castlemaine had driven him from court. And Roger, who had a delicate and sensitive pride, was forced to listen coolly and laugh, much against his will. On the whole, Madame de Beaumanoir inflicted quite as much *pain on her friends as on her enemies.*

CHAPTER VI

"YOUR LOVER IS EVER IN A BAD WAY WHEN THE
OTHER WOMAN APPEARS."

THE May came and waned, and so did the early and late summer, and Roger Egremont's days so melted one into another that the Sundays seemed only a day, instead of a week, apart. In spite of that kind promise of the Queen's that he should not be forever driving a quill, there was much writing to do. Roger solaced the long hours he spent listening to the droning voice of the King dictating to him, by the thought that in the autumn there would be an invasion of England; and if not in the autumn, in the winter; and if aught should prevent in the winter, certainly the spring would see the King at Whitehall, and himself at Egremont. One of the recompenses he promised himself for his three years' imprisonment, and for his present poverty, — living frugally on the scanty pay of one of the King's gentlemen-at-arms, — was that of kicking his half-brother out of the hall door of Egremont. For it was not enough for this hot-blooded and very faulty Roger to dispossess his brother of a stolen estate; he longed, with a strenuous longing, to feel his hand on Hugo's collar, and the sole of his well-made foot trampling Hugo's prostrate form.

It sometimes came to him, as he steadily covered reams of paper, that William of Orange could no more

The House of Egremont

Roger, for once did not join in the chorus, although he removed his hat, out of respect to the sentiments of the song, as he passed upward to his attic. For his own part, he felt deeply that gibe of the Princess Michelle, and would have been glad to go fighting the very next morning.

CHAPTER VI

“YOUR LOVER IS EVER IN A BAD WAY WHEN THE
OTHER WOMAN APPEARS.”

THE May came and waned, and so did the early and late summer, and Roger Egremont's days so melted one into another that the Sundays seemed only a day, instead of a week, apart. In spite of that kind promise of the Queen's that he should not be forever driving a quill, there was much writing to do. Roger solaced the long hours he spent listening to the droning voice of the King dictating to him, by the thought that in the autumn there would be an invasion of England; and if not in the autumn, in the winter; and if aught should prevent in the winter, certainly the spring would see the King at Whitehall, and himself at Egremont. One of the recompenses he promised himself for his three years' imprisonment, and for his present poverty, — living frugally on the scanty pay of one of the King's gentlemen-at-arms, — was that of kicking his half-brother out of the hall door of Egremont. For it was not enough for this hot-blooded and very faulty Roger to dispossess his brother of a stolen estate; he longed, with a strenuous longing, to feel his hand on Hugo's collar, and the sole of his well-made foot trampling Hugo's prostrate form.

It sometimes came to him, as he steadily covered reams of paper, that William of Orange could no more

The House of Egremont

as Madame de Beaumanoir had said. Berwick's way was commonly superior to any body else's way. He was not only the right hand of the King, but of the gentle, courageous, and sad-faced Queen. And nothing was prettier than the sight of Berwick with his little half-brother, the Prince of Wales, — the tall, grave elder brother walking in the gardens and on the terrace with the little Prince's hand in his, listening seriously to the child's chatter, carrying him when tired and sleepy, and always his favorite playfellow. Roger could find but one fault in Berwick, — that strange insensibility to the stain upon his birth, which was the more singular in a man of the nicest and most delicate honor; an insensibility which Monsieur le duc de St. Simon remarks upon in those pungent memoirs which it was known he was engaged in writing; and which was always a subject of amazed comment. Roger hated bastards so that he never quite understood or forgave Berwick this idiosyncrasy; but, apart from that, he loved Berwick with a manly and noble love.

Among the few letters to England which Roger wrote in his own proper person, was a long and grateful one to Bess Lukens, describing all his adventures after being taken from Newgate, and all which had befallen him at St. Germain, except the most important of all, — that he had fallen deeply and madly in love with a lady as far above him as he was above poor Bess. He had not once seen Michelle since that night at Madame de Beaumanoir's, and, not daring to ask what had become of her, was at last enlightened on that point by Madame de Beaumanoir.

“Gone to the convent of the Scotch Benedictines in Paris — and for what, in the name of God, think you? *To study the German language!* She could have had

Your Lover in a Bad Way

a master here, but she says she cannot be as studious here as she would wish, and she likes the quiet and retirement of the convent, where she lives as sedately as any nun. And she a beautiful young woman! I warrant I spent not my youth that way. She is greedy of knowledge, and, hoping and longing as she does to play a great part, she wants to know all about everything."

"And when does Mademoiselle d'Orantia return to St. Germain's?" Roger Egremont ventured to ask, adding a gruesome joke, — "I hope before we all depart for England."

"Surely. You need not be packing your portmanteau yet awhile, Mr. Egremont. Well, my niece will come back in time for the hay-making in August, for that is one of the few amusements my lady condescends to, — that, and taking long rides a-horseback with nobody but François for an escort."

After this, Roger watched the hay-fields with a learned and critical eye, knowing, as he did, all the lore of growing crops. And on a fair day in August it was given forth that on the next day all the ladies and gentlemen would assemble at noon to make the King's hay for him.

Be sure that Roger Egremont was in the meadow long before the procession of hay-makers started from the old palace, and walked the length of the terrace to the low-lying fields. It was a glorious midsummer day, and never were the prospects of King James better in the way of haying. The hay-makers, bearing the proudest names of England, Scotland, Ireland, and France, were dressed as peasants, but their costumes were made of silken stuffs such as no peasant ever wore. The dress of the exiles, both ladies and gentlemen, was

The House of Egremont

a little shabby; their old brocades and laces brought from England were showing signs of wear and tear. They all carried gilded hay-forks, and rakes tied with ribbons, except Berwick, who did nothing by halves, and was worth two ordinary day laborers in haying time; he carried an iron hay-fork and rake, borrowed from a gardener.

Roger Egremont, loitering amid the cherry trees in Madame Michot's orchard, came out and joined the merry crew when it reached the meadow. He was dressed as a peasant, in true peasant's clothes, borrowed from Jacques Michot, but clean and well fitting, as became the work of Madame Michot's fingers. The shirt, open at the neck, showed the white column of his throat, as fair as a duchess's, next the manly tan and sunburn of his face. His hat, also borrowed from Jacques, was trimmed with the field poppies and the blue cornflower. His eyes sought but one figure, and there she was, walking daintily along, near the end of the procession, — Michelle, Princess d'Orantia. She was dressed as a true peasant maiden, in a gown of white linen, and her hat was bound with a wreath of wild roses.

Then, to the singing of harvest songs, they fell to work. The hay had been cut early in the morning; it was their business to rake and stack it.

Roger Egremont in some way divined that to work well was a way to win Michelle's favor; so he fell to work with an intelligent energy that fairly rivalled Berwick's. And — oh, joy! — Michelle raked the hay for him to cock! She too as far surpassed the ladies in work as Roger surpassed all the men except Berwick. She seemed as insensible to fatigue as he was, and *making hay in August is no merry jest*. Roger thought

Your Lover in a Bad Way

he had never seen so fascinating an employment for a graceful woman, — raking and tossing the hay, lightly, yet with strength, every motion revealing the grace of her figure, and the beauty of her arms and her dainty feet, and bringing a flush, deep yet delicate, to her usually colorless face. She worked even when Roger rested, mercilessly prodding him with her hay-fork until he resumed his work, rated Berwick soundly for not making his hay-stack as well as usual, and was easily the star of the hayfield.

All through the golden afternoon they worked. Roger tried in vain to engage Michelle in conversation about other matters than haying, to which she gave her undivided attention.

“Mademoiselle, you have been much missed at St. Germain since your departure for Paris,” he ventured.

“I should have truly been missed had I been absent from the hay-field to-day, for I never saw the King’s hay more lazily attended to,” she replied tartly. “There is more singing than work.” For just then a song was being trolled forth by Captain Ogilvie, the Irish gentleman who composed such beautiful songs, all about —

“*Que ne suis-je sans vie,
Ou sans amour.*”

“I agree with you, mademoiselle, that we sing too much at St. Germain,” said Roger, significantly; and Michelle’s reply to this was, —

“Pray, Mr. Egremont, attend to your work. If you do not better, I shall ask the King not to pay you your wage;” at which Roger went furiously to work, declaring he could not afford to lose so much.

At five o’clock the King and Queen descended the great flight of two hundred stone steps from the terrace,

The House of Egremont

and calling the hay-makers about them, proceeded to inspect their work and give them theirdole of money, — a few pence each, which were treasured, as even the smallest gifts of royalty are. So pleased were their Majesties with the two hay-cocks made by Roger and Michelle — none of the rest had made more than one, except Berwick — that they were each given an extra coin. To this, great complaint was made by Berwick, but the King declined to pay him more.

And then, in the purple twilight, the whole party turned homeward, walking along with their forks and rakes upon their shoulders, singing chansons that floated through the mellow air, fragrant with the new-mown hay. Roger walked by Michelle's side, and sang with her the song that echoed sweetly over fields and woods :

“ Come, maids and swains, to join our summer greeting,
Youth and the summer time are ever fleeting.

Returns the summer time,
Not so youth's golden prime;
It cometh not again,
It cometh not again!”

He felt as in a dream; and the spell seemed over Michelle too, for when the party separated he found himself walking alone with her in the dusk, along the road, under over-arching trees, that led through the park to the château. They were still singing softly, and Roger, without knowing why or even when he did it, held out his hand, and she laid hers within it, and so, like a shepherd and shepherdess, they passed along together. What sweet and peaceful thoughts, like birds nesting in the trees after the day's work, were theirs! All the world was left behind and out of sight. *They were Corydon and Amaryllis returning to their*

Your Lover in a Bad Way

cot at eve. Not one whole day had they ever spent in each other's company, yet had their souls rushed together when first they found themselves alone.

They had begun with acting a little part of shepherd and his shepherdess, but now it seemed quite real; they had quite forgotten the every-day world. Michelle's eyes were softly gleaming. At first they had been merry and full of quiet laughter; now they smiled at each other but no longer laughed. Presently they came to an open spot, before which stood the great gates and porter's lodge of the château. Instinctively both stopped, and Roger raised Michelle's hand to his lips; it seemed the simplest and most natural thing in the world. She stood still for a while, and there was a pause — the sweetest pause — filled in with the faint and musical sounds of evening. They came back slowly and gently to the every-day world, but the world about them was so beautiful that it seemed rather a continuation of their dream.

"I shall not forget this day as long as I live," said Roger.

Michelle looked at him a moment with startled eyes, and then replied: "I love these haying-days. I would not miss one if I could help it."

"Would that every day in summer were a haying-day," cried Roger, "and that you and I —"

"Good-night, Mr. Egremont," was Michelle's reply.

Her figure melted away in the darkness under the trees, but Roger's keen eyes saw her turn and look back at him, standing still where she had left him.

When she was out of sight Roger turned homeward, through the forest. He was glad to be alone, he disdained any other company after Michelle's. He was in a kind of ecstasy, and his spirit was as light as a

The House of Egremont

lark upon the wing. The forest was wrapped in the silence of the coming night and the owls were beginning to hoot. The harvest moon, a great, golden, smoky lamp, shone through the trees, but the west still held a faint glory of crimson and green and gold. The dusk of evening was descending fast, when Roger noticed, approaching him from a side avenue, a person, apparently a young and slender man, wrapped in a black cloak, with a black hat drawn down over the eyes. By the time Roger had made out the outlines of this figure, they were face to face; and then the stranger suddenly whipped out a sword from the folds of his cloak, and pointed it straight at Roger. It did not take Roger a second to seize the blade deftly in his left hand and wrench it away, while with his right he caught the stranger by the throat, — a throat as white as milk, and from which came gurgling sounds of laughter; and the hat falling off, he saw the laughing, upturned face of Bess Lukens, with her curly, reddish hair falling about her shoulders.

Not the appearance of Satan himself could have disconcerted Roger Egremont more at that moment than the sight of the woman whom he justly called his best friend. Like a blaze of lightning in a murky night, he saw in one flash all the difficulties of the case, the chiefest of which would be to make the little world of St. Germain's believe in the perfect honesty of Bess's character. He felt acutely for the shame the girl might suffer, and when he thought of Michelle, he likewise felt acutely for himself. But he was man enough to greet Bess warmly, after the first momentary astonishment, to kiss her hand — ah, it was not like kissing Michelle's hand an hour ago! — and to lie to Bess like a gentleman.

Your Lover in a Bad Way

"Dear Bess, how glad I am to see you!" he cried, and then he noticed, as she threw aside her cloak, that she was dressed in a man's riding suit. "And why this disguise?"

"Because," said Bess, taking him by the arm affectionately, but not familiarly, "I an't a bad-looking girl, and some of the mounseers might have bothered me, and I, not knowing the lingo, should n't have known what to say. So I bought me this suit in Dover, and also this sword; 't is nothing but a brass-handled thing, but it went well with the breeches. And I called myself Mr. Wat Jones. I don't believe a soul on the vessel suspected me. I got here from a place they called Calais, by riding in country wagons and walking. Nobody troubled me, because they thought I was a poor young gentleman, driven out of England by the Whigs, and coming to my King at St. Germain's, and I did n't have anything in sight worth stealing, — maybe that's why the mounseers was so honest; so that's how I got here. I went to a tavern where the wagon stopped that I made the last stage by, and I determined to hang about the town until I could get private speech of you, for I came yesterday. I held my tongue about you, but I kept both eyes open. This afternoon I heard about the hay-making in the meadow — what queer things gentlefolks do by way of pleasure! I was afraid to go near the meadow, for fear you might see me, and cry, 'Oh, Lord!' or something of the sort; so I walked about the place they called the terrace, and saw you making hay in the meadow with a young lady. She was n't so beautiful; there were others comelier, I thought. Then, when you all started home, I walked toward the forest, and then into it; and it was growing so dark that I thought I should have to go back to

The House of Egremont

the tavern. And then I saw you, and the devil put it into my head to stick this sword at you, but you didn't flinch;" and Bess concluded by putting herself in an impossible attitude, and flourishing her sword with a kind of awkward gracefulness under Roger's nose.

And Roger, gallantly fulfilling his obligations as a gentleman, lied and lied again.

"However you come, Bess, and whenever, I must ever be glad to see you;" and then he told the truth for a change: "and I, and all I have—not much of the last—are at your disposal."

Being a gentleman, he did not ask her the question that disquieted him,—what she had come for,—but Bess relieved him by telling him.

"Thank you, Roger, but I hope I sha'n't be any great bother to you. I have some money, near forty pound, and that will last me till I can get work. You see, my uncle got married again, the old fool, and there was no room for me and a step-aunt. And I saw the chance I'd been longing and praying for of getting away from Newgate gaol. I found I had some little money my daddy had left me, besides some I had made myself, and I went to my uncle and made him give it me; he warn't very anxious to do it. His minx of a new wife was so glad to get rid of me, though, that neither of 'em asked me any questions about where I was going. But, Roger, *I* knew where I was going. I was going somewhere that nobody would know I was the niece of old Lukens, the turnkey; and that place was France, where I knew there were a plenty of English, and my King and my best friend among 'em. I left my own country with a light heart, and if ever I go back there, *'t will be as something* people won't point their thumbs

Your Lover in a Bad Way

at and say, 'There goes the turnkey's girl!' And if I starve and freeze in this country, I reckon it won't be any worse than starving and freezing in England; and besides, I'm a Jacobite, I am. I hate them common, vulgar Whigs, and all their doings; and when King James goes back, Miss Lukens will go along with him!"

Roger could not forbear laughing at Bess's politics, but the coolness, courage, and readiness with which she had carried out the plan she had devised so cunningly gave him ease about her; Bess Lukens could take care of herself anywhere. Excellent, however, as all her motives were, there was an uncomfortable haunting feeling in Roger's mind, that all of those reasons would have applied equally to any country where he could be found.

"Well, then," said Roger, cheerfully, "let us now determine what is best to be done for you. But first put that damned sword of yours out of the way, else you will run me through the body before you know it."

Bess restored the sword to its scabbard, and turning with Roger, they walked under the trees at the edge of the forest. It was an odorous summer night, and the nightingales were singing. Bess was very happy, and Roger was wretched and uncomfortable beyond description; but he hid it manfully.

"I have other clothes than these," said Bess, "and working people can find work the world over; so you need not be unhappy about me. Only let me get decent quarters, and I'll not be afraid."

"True, Bess; but you are a girl of sense, and you must see that if I would not be your worst enemy, I must be careful how I befriend you. So, my girl, be

The House of Egremont

not doubtful of me if I shall seem not to seek thy company. This is an evil-thinking world."

"I know it," Bess cut in. "You can't tell me anything about this ugly old world. One does n't see the pretty side of it, fetched up as I was. But I think 't will be brighter for me if I can live free from that everlasting, tormenting, hideous ghost, which walked after me in England, — 'Red Bess, the turnkey's niece.' I hope I've left the shade on t'other side of the water."

"I hope so, too, Bess. And now go we back to your inn, and you stay there the night, and I will write you a letter in the morning."

They turned and walked toward the town, Bess talking happily, and Roger acting his part with perfect success, but with a sinking heart. It is ever an evil time with your lover, when the other woman turns up.

Leaving Bess at the entrance of the little lane that led to her humble inn, Roger made great strides toward Madame Michot's. He met Berwick coming out.

"Return with me," cried Roger; and taking him up into his large room under the eaves, Roger poured out the whole story of Bess Lukens.

Berwick laughed a little. Roger's chagrin was comical; and when Berwick asked him the point-blank question, "Now, since you say the girl is good and honest and beautiful, and yet you are not in love with her, can you tell me whether she is in love with you, or not?" Roger changed countenance so quickly that Berwick laughed aloud.

"I swear," cried Roger, "I never knew—I never asked. Hang it, man, the devil take you and your questions." Berwick laughed more than ever at *this*.

Your Lover in a Bad Way

"Come," said he, "let us consult our good friend Madame Michot. I am but mortal, and I know not how to advise a man concerning a handsome girl whom he has seen daily for three years, who, he declares, has been his best friend, and he does not know whether she is in love with him or not!"

So they put out in search of Madame Michot, whom they found in her usual place on the platform, with the lights from the common room shining through the iron grille, and making fantastic shadows on the table before her.

"Madam," said Berwick, in his most seductive voice, and with his finest bow, "we have come to you as our help in time of trouble;" and then, seating himself close to Madame Michot, on the right, while Roger planted himself on the step at her feet, these two artful creatures told the good woman all they thought it expedient for her to know concerning Red Bess, — not mentioning, as Roger had warned Berwick, her ignoble condition in England. And as for the poor landlady, what chance had she against the machinations of two of her favorite customers? She succumbed at once.

"There is always much washing to do at an inn, — sheets and towels and table-cloths, — and I could easily give her three days' work out of the week," said Madame Michot, with her finger on her lip. "The young person may be above that, though."

"No, indeed she is not," cried Roger, earnestly; "and besides, being a girl of sense, she sees how necessary it is that she shall have respectable surroundings, and to be employed by you, madam — with the very great respect which you command —"

"I would establish the poor girl's character forever," said Berwick, decisively, bringing the point of his sword

The House of Egremont

down on the floor. "Employed by Madame Michot, who could say a word against her?"

"You may send her to-morrow morning," replied Madame Michot, with the greatest amiability.

"What a wonderful woman is Madame Michot!" exclaimed Roger. "But for that one little word 'send' I should have brought Bess Lukens myself, and thereby set every wicked tongue in St. Germain's wagging. But I cannot be too careful not to do that poor girl the slightest harm, because she stood my friend when most I needed friends."

Next morning, about nine o'clock, Bess, having heard from Roger, presented herself at the inn of Michot. Madame Michot was in the orchard near which the sparkling river made a bend, and where the weekly washing was taking place, when the vision of a tall and beautiful young woman, stepping with careless grace over the grass, presented itself before her. It had not occurred to Roger to mention Bess's sumptuous beauty, and when Madame Michot saw it, a thrill of fear ran up and down the good woman's backbone. She had not meant to take the responsibility of a girl as heavily handicapped with beauty as Bess was. Why, Jacques might — However, Madame Michot, by an inspiration, glanced at Bess's hands. They were well shaped, and not large for her size, but they bore the unmistakable marks of toil. A load was lifted from Madame Michot's shoulders — Bess had lived by honest toil.

Bess proceeded to introduce herself, and Madame Michot met her advances kindly, replying in broken but intelligible English to her, but understanding fully all Bess had to say. And Bess, then and there rolling up the sleeves of her linen gown, fell to work with such *ferocious* energy and despatch that Madame Michot was

Your Lover in a Bad Way

astounded and delighted. Twenty-four hours made both her and Jacques enthusiastic supporters of Bess Lukens. For whatever Bess turned her hand to, she did so capably and so rapidly that it was a marvel; and Madame Michot, with her shrewd French common-sense, was the very woman to be impressed by Bess's undeniable talent for work.

That night Roger was detained at the palace. Many despatches had come in from England, and replies had to be sent at once; so he worked in the King's closet all day, and then, after a hurried supper in the mess room, returned and worked until late in the evening. It was near midnight before he left the palace and crept up the stairs to his room at the inn, fearful of being caught by the roysterers in the common room; and he was in no mood for roystering. That sweet, delicate spell that had been cast over him by the twilight walk with Michelle the night before had been rudely broken. Since then he had scarcely a moment in which to recall the sound of her charming voice as she spoke, the velvety blackness of her eyes, the sweet, sweet thought that she too had lapsed into the dream which had enthralled him. He had leisure now, and when the merry crowd below had gone off singing roundels in French and English, Roger, like a true lover, hung out of his one great window, watching the stars, and trying to believe that he could catch a glimpse of the roof under which Michelle slept, far across the meadows and the woods. And when he laid himself upon his bed, it was to live over in his dreams that enchanted walk.

The sun was high in the heavens next morning when Roger was awakened by a far-off sound of singing. Down in the orchard, Bess Lukens had begun her day's

The House of Egremont

I am Monsieur Mazet, one of the directors of the King's Opera; and wherever I go — on my little journeys for pleasure, or my expeditions for business, by day or by night — I am on the lookout for good voices. I have been an enraptured listener this morning to this young woman's singing. And I beg of you to say to her that, if she wishes to study under my direction, and is willing to pay the dole of labor which art exacts, I can promise her great success, great fame — all, all that a beautiful voice can bring to a beautiful woman."

Here Madame Michot interrupted vigorously. "Now, Monsieur Roger, don't put any such notions in the girl's head. Don't I know what becomes of poor girls who go to Paris? She will rue it the longest day she lives. I have seen them go, and, oh, my God! I have seen them return, — a sorry sight. So tell her, instead, that she had much better remain here. I will give her a good home if she will work and behave herself; and I have little doubt that she does both work well and behave well."

Monsieur Mazet heard this with a sniff of scorn. He threw a whole volume of expression in his face as, with a grimace indicating the utmost distaste for Madame Michot, he waved his long arms about. Madame Michot, on her part, gave him a look of contemptuous pity, as much as to say, "Poor creature!"

Monsieur began hostilities by saying, —

"Madame, perhaps, does not understand the feeling for art which —"

"No, I don't," vigorously replied Madame Michot, "but I know, as I tell you, what waits for a girl like this, poor and handsome and ignorant, in Paris, and —"

"My position madam, as director —"

Your Lover in a Bad Way

"My profession, sir, of keeping an inn, has taught me to know human nature."

The altercation grew warmer, Bess and Roger remaining silent. At last, when Madame Michot's usually placid voice rose to a high key, and Monsieur Mazet used some ugly words, Roger interfered politely, and proposed to lay the two propositions before Bess. This was agreed to by both combatants, upon condition that he offered no advice. Bess listened gravely while he explained to her in English all that Monsieur Mazet and Madame Michot had been saying, and then she replied promptly, —

"Would I rather go to Paris and learn to be a singer in the King's Opera, or would I rather stay here and wash linen? Why, Master Roger, I would rather go to Paris; and if Madame Michot or that gentleman thinks I can't take care of myself, show you them that scar I left on your skull."

"But I would not advise you to go until you learn something of the French tongue," said Roger, pledged not to advise, but eager to protect her.

"Right. I always said you had some brains under your curly hair. Now say to them that I will stay here and work for a couple of months, until I learn to know what people are saying to me; and after that, if the gentleman will come and fetch me, I will go to Paris and learn to sing in the King's Opera."

This Solomonic decision had the uncommon effect of pleasing both parties to the controversy.

Madame Michot considered, if she saved the brand for two months from the burning, she could save it altogether; while Monsieur Mazet had no doubt whatever that two months' experience of the drudgery of a village inn would secure his prize for Paris. Roger, too, was

The House of Egremont

pleased with the decision, which showed the strong good sense that Bess usually displayed in practical affairs.

Madame Michot invited them all to breakfast with her and Jacques ; and they all accepted. The table was spread in the orchard, and the proud Roger Egremont enjoyed very much this meal with the director of the King's Opera, the landlady and her son, and the turn-key's niece. They were a very merry party. Bess was in the highest spirits ; here at last was that chance, so longed for, to rise into a respectable sphere of life, — for Bess did not count the gaoler's trade as respectable. And singing was so easy ! She could not keep from doing it if she tried. She supposed there would be some hardships, but she knew the ugly face of hardship too well to be frightened at it, and perhaps Roger — here Bess sternly checked her vagrant imagination. The others did not know, and she earnestly hoped might never find out, the story of her childhood and youth ; but Roger knew it, and could never forget it.

That day and for some days afterward, there was much carolling to the accompaniment of a crazy clavichord in Monsieur Mazet's lodgings ; for he was to remain some days at St. Germain, and immediately began Bess's musical education. Bess took to music and singing with ardor and intelligence ; she had a strong frame and was never tired, although everybody within hearing, except Monsieur Mazet, got a little weary sometimes of her incessant trilling. On the third day, after meeting with Monsieur Mazet, she found an instrument more to her liking than Monsieur Mazet's clavichord. This was Dicky Egremont's fiddle.

On that afternoon, Bess, who was always provided with knitting, was sitting on a bench in the orchard, *her fingers flying*. Monsieur Mazet, having thrummed

Your Lover in a Bad Way

and strummed the whole morning on the clavichord, teaching his apt pupil, was taking a rest in his lodgings. Madame Michot and Jacques were at the inn. Madame Michot noticed with approval that Bess showed no inclination to hang about the inn, but when her work was over went off to the orchard, or to the little closet of a room she had, to spend her leisure. It was not possible that the presence of a girl so handsome, and lately from England, should not be known to the merry gentlemen who frequented Madame Michot's common room; and had not Bess kept out of the way she could easily have made herself a toast, and likewise a subject of gossip, among those same merry gentlemen. But Bess had learned prudence in a hard school, and had learned it well, and, her ideas of the chivalry of men having been formed upon those who dwelt in Newgate, she had by no means a high opinion of the sex in general. Therefore, when she saw approaching her in the pleasant August afternoon a young man in the black dress of a seminarian, she quickly determined that the orchard would not very long be large enough for both. And having heard bad accounts of papists and papistry in general, the fact that the young man wore a monkish dress set her still more against him. Presently he came near, and bowed and smiled and blushed, — for Dicky Egremont seemed always blushing, — and Bess could not for the life of her keep from returning his friendly glance.

“’Tis Mistress Bess Lukens I have the honor of addressing,” said Dicky in his sweet and youthful voice.

Bess rose and dropped a courtesy, trying to scowl, but failing.

“Pray let me introduce myself. I am Mr. Richard Egremont, a cousin of Mr. Roger Egremont.”

The House of Egremont

"Are you Dicky?" cried Bess, surprised out of herself, and then coloring at her inadvertence.

"I am Dicky to Roger," replied Dicky, "and naturally you never heard him speak of me by any other name. Know, Mistress Bess, Roger has told me of all your goodness to him while he was in prison, and for that reason, when I came to the inn just now and heard you were here, I ventured to come and pay you my respects. For all who are good to my cousin, Roger Egremont, are friends of mine."

"Thank you, Mr. D—I mean Mr. Egremont. 'T was little I could do for Mr. Roger, but I had the best will in the world."

Dicky had seated himself at the other end of the garden bench, and Bess had resumed her knitting. The afternoon sun sifted down upon her great plaits of auburn hair, bringing out all the red and gold in it, and the tawny depths in her brown eyes. Dicky noticed what Madame Michot had,—the evidences of hard work on Bess's hands, and he thought he knew her to be, from Roger's description, one of the best women in the world.

"Madame Michot told me, just now in the house, that you had a mighty pretty voice, and would go to Paris some time before long, to study for the King's Opera," he began, by way of making acquaintance.

"Yes," replied Bess, her face lighting up with pleasure at the mere mention of her becoming a singer. "I think I must be the fortunatest poor girl that ever lived. A kind gentleman here, Mr. Mazet, heard me singing, and offered to teach me at Paris, and Mr. Roger thinks it all right that I should go. They all tell me 't will be hard work, but I can't think singing hard work; 't would *be hard work* for me to keep from singing."

Your Lover in a Bad Way

"Yes," said Dicky, gravely, "'Tis monstrous hard work for me to keep from fiddling. At the seminary where I am studying to be a priest, I am not allowed to fiddle all I want; and my superiors are right. For the hours fly when I have the bow in my hand, and my fingers dancing upon the strings; and often, when I think I have been playing but a few minutes, 'tis a whole hour."

For the first time Bess found some one who could talk and feel as she did about music, and she replied eagerly, —

"So 'tis with me! So 'tis with me!"

"Only those who love music can understand it," continued Dicky, as eager as Bess. "'Tis life and light and joy and hope and solace —"

"And meat and drink and coals," responded the practical Bess.

And then their talk drifted to Roger. Every moment Bess felt more and more drawn to this frank, boyish Dicky, and insensibly she adopted Roger's attitude of superior age. Dicky was really only a little younger than Bess, but she felt as if he were born yesterday, and she were as old as the Pharaohs by comparison. As for his monkish religion, she looked on it as she did on Roger's — as a departure from the ordinary, like children who are born with six toes — singular, but harmless. And then something inspired Bess to give Dicky her confidence about that black spectre of her past — her life in Newgate.

"Mr. Di — I mean, Mr. Egremont, I don't believe you are the man to do an ill turn to a poor girl, or a child, or a dog, or anything that's not very strong," she burst out presently, "and I want you to do me a kindness. I hate worse than pi'sen the notion that people should know

The House of Egremont

that—that—I am the niece of a gaoler and turnkey. 'T was that which chiefly made me seek my fortune in France; and will you please to promise to keep it to yourself?—for I know that Master Roger must have told it you."

"Truly, I will keep your secret, Mistress Bess. No one shall ever hear anything of you from me, except that you befriended Roger in prison, and nobody knows how you did it."

"My uncle's calling was the sorest thing to me in the world, Mr. Egremont. It sickens me to think how much I learned of wickedness in that dreadful prison the seven years I lived there. But knowing wickedness only made me hate it the more. I swore I would never be as most of the creatures were there, and the hatred of evil, more than the love of good, has kept me in the straight path. Madame Michot, and that good, industrious, lame Jacques do not know about the gaol, and I think not the grand gentleman, the Duke of Berwick, who helped Mr. Roger to get me in this place; but I am not sure,—I dared not ask Mr. Roger if he had told him. *You* knew it, though, and it takes a great load off my heart to know you'll not tell it abroad."

"Indeed I will not. And—and—Mistress Bess, I have my fiddle within. Could we not have some sweet music together?"

"Yes," cried Bess, delighted, and Dicky, running toward the house, presently returned with his fiddle. He tuned up, and Bess asking if he could play "*Green Sleeves*," her sweet, strong voice, and the soft and thrilling strains of the violin rose in harmony. The summer sun was near setting, and the shadows were *long in the orchard*. The birds ceased their twittering

Your Lover in a Bad Way

to listen to the music, that rose, full and strong and rich, and melted away in the darkening blue of the sky. They both stood, Dicky drawing his bow, slowly and softly, and bringing the tenderest melody forth, and then quickly changing to the merriest laughing, dancing measure, and Bess, with her heart in her eyes, her glorious voice following and intertwining and melting into the sweet strains of the violin. It was as if their two souls met and sang together. One song succeeded another, and so absorbed were they that Bess, for once, actually forgot she had work to do. Nor was it possible for the music to remain unheard at the inn. Presently Bess realized that figures were stealing into the orchard, from which the afternoon light was fading.

A loud clapping of hands after Bess had sung "Drink to me only with thine eyes" broke the spell. All the idlers from the inn had strolled out to listen. A handsome Scotch gentleman was for singing with Bess, but she, curtly declining, curtsied and walked toward the inn.

"An ungracious jade," said the Scotch gentleman, turning on his heel.

"The girl has sense," muttered Monsieur Mazet, who was listening and watching from his window, overlooking the orchard.

And in that orchard, singing those simple English songs, was made the beginning of a friendship between an Egremont and the turnkey's niece that was to last until life ended.

CHAPTER VII

IN WHICH ROGER EGREMONT MEETS WITH BOTH GOOD AND ILL FORTUNE

WHAT is reckoned ill luck at one time is counted the best of good luck at another. Roger Egremont, who had fretted continually in his heart about being tied to the King's writing-table, now was secretly rejoiced that he had ample duty to do, because of one of his fellow-secretaries falling ill just about the time of Bess Lukens's arrival at St. Germain's. Therefore he could see but little of that brave and honest creature. The reflection gave him a strange sense of relief, and also of remorse. In his prison days he scarcely knew how he should have existed without her. And now — oh, inconstant heart of man! — he could do very well without poor Bess. Never did he falter in his friendship to her, and often congratulated himself that Bess saw no change or shadow of turning in him. But Bess had more penetration than even Roger gave her credit for.

"'Tis what I expected," she thought, sadly. "He is good and kind and thoughtful, and I believe would give me his last shilling, or die in my defence; but I am no more necessary to him. The prison life is an unnatural life; now he has got back to the open, free life, and instead of one companion, he has many. Well, I ever wished him free, and I will not be so base as to *grudge him his freedom.*"

Roger Meets Good and Ill Fortune

The first month that Bess spent at the inn of Michot was by far the hardest worked of her whole life. She had been used, in the days at Newgate gaol, to carry water and wood and other heavy burdens, to sweep, to wash, to dust, to bake, to brew, to go on foot long distances, in cold, in heat, in wet, in drought, but she had never wrestled with learning a language. She made frantic attempts to learn French out of an ancient grammar provided her by Monsieur Mazet, but as she was not expert with printed words in English, she was still less so in French, and progressed but little in that way. She did make, however, considerable headway in learning words and sentences from Madame Michot and Jacques, whose accent was so frightfully provincial that it would have put a Parisian's teeth on edge.

In the middle of the month Monsieur Mazet came on another visit to St. Germain, and went straight to the inn. Bess ran to meet him, and swelling with pride, greeted him with her Michot French, and rattled out all she knew.

Poor Monsieur Mazet almost wept. "Oh, my God!" he cried. "Such an accent as that, to be said and sung before his Majesty! I shall be sent to the Bastille for life, and I shall deserve it, if I present you at the Opera with that combination of alehouse English and road-inn French. No, no, no, mademoiselle, you *must* speak better." At which Bess grew sulky, and relapsed into English, and shortly after, meeting Roger on the stairs, she abused roundly the French language, adding: "And Madame Michot and Jacques and Papa Mazet are all good to me, but they are not like English folk. I think the queer things they have to eat in France make the people queer, — that's my solemn belief, Master Roger. I have not seen a bit of what I call butcher's

The House of Egremont

meat since I came to the country," she cried. "A ha'p'orth of beef, as dry as my shoe, and a mess of nettles and such that they call a salad, is what they live on! Never mind; when I get to Paris I'll cook that poor half-starved Papa Mazet something fit for a Christian to eat!"

Nevertheless Bess persevered, and in a few weeks learned enough to be glib and intelligible in conversation, although Papa Mazet still tore his hair at the continuing vileness of her grammar and pronunciation. Bess naturally felt great curiosity to know whether, among the many beautiful and charming women at St. Germain's any had won Roger's heart. But she had no means of satisfying her curiosity. So she drudged and sang, and picked up such French as she could, smiled when Roger sought her out, and on the whole took life bravely and cheerfully, as was her wont. The time would soon come when she would go to Paris, to study with Papa Mazet, as she had come to call him. She was to live in his house with an ancient sister of his; and Bess shrewdly suspected that Roger would be more anxious to see her when she was some hours' journey away than when he could, if he chose, see her any hour in the day.

Dicky had returned to the seminary after his holiday of a day or two was over, but he came back once again for a day, and voice and violin made music together in the cherry-orchard.

The Princess Michelle, spending her time reading and writing, or riding far and fast about the country with François for a cavalier, and seeing but little of the gayeties of St. Germain's, could not get the thought of the bold Englishman, Mr. Egremont, out of her mind. *Of course*, she soon found out all about him, — trust a

Roger Meets Good and Ill Fortune

woman for that,—and by scarcely asking a question. He seemed to her cavalier and martyr in one. Three years in Newgate! A gentleman, a man of education,—how sad a fate! Michelle heard much of Roger's acquirements and naturally supposed him to have been a learned young man when he slapped the plate of beans into Dutch William's face. And the half-brother whom he had fostered and generously maintained, to oust him from his inheritance! Surely, no man at St. Germain's had been so hardly dealt with; and the knowledge that William of Orange wished to conciliate him, and that there was little doubt he could have recovered most if not all of his estate, by simply staying at Egremont when he was flung down there, and that he refused the bounty of a usurper, and chose rather to share honorable poverty and exile with his fellow loyalists,—all this appealed powerfully to this dark-eyed child of France.

She did not meet him often,—he was kept close to the château then, and she did not much frequent the levees there,—and so only saw him two or three times at a distance for some weeks after the haying. Roger's eyes, it is true, were always seeking Michelle whenever he walked abroad, but he went not after her bodily. She had not given him permission to visit her, and while it was true that Madame de Beaumanoir was forever urging him to come to see her, the old lady stayed at home so seldom that there was small chance of seeing her except upon those formal occasions when she held handsome routs and balls. And, most of all, Roger was instinctively learned in the hearts of women, and he divined that if he did not go often to the château of Beaumanoir, the haughty daughter of the Holy Roman Empire would wonder why he stayed.

The House of Egremont

away when he might have come. As for daughters of the Holy Roman Empire and widows of dukes and peers of France, Roger Egremont reckoned that an English gentleman of ancient and honorable lineage was in every way their equal — and proposed to act up to his belief.

His inward prophecy was fulfilled in one way. Mademoiselle d'Orantia wondered extremely why Mr. Egremont did not try to see and speak with her — wondered every day, and more than once a day; and one lovely September morning, walking with only an attendant through the forest of St. Germain, with this vexatious thought of Roger in her mind, she suddenly came upon what she thought was the reason of his want of zeal for the prosecution of her acquaintance. She saw him ahead of her, at a turning in the forest, talking with a handsome young creature, in the coarse skirt and bodice and linen cap of a woman of the humbler class; and he held his hat in his hand, and bowed with so much deference when he left her that she might have been the Queen herself.

Roger Egremont passed on without seeing Michelle, and his companion turning on her way, the two women came face to face in the narrow path. Michelle, wearing a large hat and feathers, holding her silken skirts up daintily, her servant following her with her book, was at once recognized by Bess as the young lady she had seen with Roger the day of the hay-making in the meadow. They both colored high, and Michelle, haughtily turned away her eyes as she passed. Bess, so far from doing likewise, craned her neck as she went on, and watched Michelle until an elbow in the road hid her from view.

Let it not be supposed that any woman, in her heart,

Roger Meets Good and Ill Fortune

disparages her rival. Bess Lukens did not, for one moment, recognize the far greater beauty that was hers; she only saw the grace and elegance of Michelle, her delicate figure and slim hands and feet, and her heart cried aloud, "How coarse and common must I seem to Roger, when he sees these dainty ladies!"

And Michelle, acutely sensitive to the brightness and splendor of Bess's beauty, to her ravishing coloring and glorious physical perfections, said to herself with a bitterness, for which she could not account, —

"No wonder Mr. Egremont takes off his hat to that sumptuous creature. Pity some of her betters had not her beauty; we are but pale and bloodless shadows alongside of that brilliant comeliness."

And as it always happens, Roger was called to account by both Bess and Michelle. Bess, with an armful of clean linen, meeting Roger that evening on the stairs, said tartly, —

"I saw to-day the young lady that you made hay with. She is not so handsome."

Bess, observe, was speaking not to herself, but to Roger Egremont, of the woman she thought he favored.

Roger, with a poltroon's readiness, answered, —

"I think she is not considered a great beauty, though very charming. She is not half so handsome as you. How come you on in French?"

"Pretty well," replied Bess, seeing that Roger slid away from the subject of the Princess Michelle — whose name and quality she had found out promptly. "I know enough French now to make the impudent French devils behave themselves." And she passed on to her work.

Roger went up to his attic congratulating himself that

The House of Egremont

Michelle had not seen him with Bess in the forest that morning, — a purely accidental meeting, as he was on his way to do an errand for the King, though it might well have looked like an appointment. The first thing he saw on his rickety table was a note from Madame de Beaumanoir. She would be at home that evening. Would Mr. Egremont come? It was always a pleasure to see one of those devil-may-care Egremonts.

Roger immediately began dressing himself in his gray and silver suit, and afterward went to a barber in the town to shave him and give a curl to his long fair hair. The Princess Michelle did not wear powder; he had ever loathed it, and would scarcely have put a dust of it on his hair then for a thousand pounds, and swore frightfully at the innocent barber when he suggested it.

The château de Beaumanoir was all ablaze with lights. Servants were in plenty, and a supper which would have commanded even Bess Lukens's respect was set out, — an English custom which Madame de Beaumanoir had retained, as she retained all her other English customs. Crowds attended her levees, as crowds always will when there is meat and drink and amusement free.

Roger entered the grand saloon to speak to Madame de Beaumanoir meanwhile, looking out with a beating heart for Michelle. Yes, there she stood, in her usual place near the old duchess. She was looking unusually charming. She was singular, not only in eschewing powder, but in not wearing the gigantic head-dress of the age, — a head-dress much disliked by Louis the Fourteenth, but which the power of one of the most absolute monarchs in the world was unable to abolish. As Roger drew near Michelle, some gentlemen and

Roger Meets Good and Ill Fortune

ladies were complimenting her upon the favor shown her by the King on her late visit to Marly-le-Roi.

"'Tis said that the King not only spoke of you after you left, but complimented you the next day," said one.

"'T was very kind of his Majesty," said Michelle; and the old Duchess, turning to Roger who was nearby, cried out, —

"'T was all because she wore her own hair and no head-dress. By such things is the favor of kings won!"

"And is it true, mademoiselle, that his Majesty walked with you by the side of the canal for half an hour, and then, to have more private talk, went with you toward the dairy in the wood?" some one asked.

"The King walked a little with me," replied Michelle, coolly — she had by no means that overpowering subservience to royalty which was the prevailing fashion. Yet, Roger Egremont, keen of wit, saw that she was rather more pleased than she would admit. What young girl would not be, singled out for conversation by the greatest monarch in the world?

"I think, mademoiselle," Roger ventured, "the dressing of your hair was a master stroke. I hear the King has labored incessantly, but vainly, against those monstrous head-dresses for years; and when his Majesty saw a woman of taste like yourself, mademoiselle, why should he not favor you?"

Michelle, instead of keeping to the safe and steady ground of Louis the Fourteenth and head-dresses, asked very softly and sweetly a question she thought would be most embarrassing to Roger.

"Who was that handsome creature I saw you speaking with in the forest this morning?"

The House of Egremont

Roger started and colored guiltily. He at once remembered Bess, but he could not recall seeing Michelle.

"This morning?" he stammered. "Well, 't was — I—I—I did not see you in the forest then, mademoiselle?"

"No," replied Michelle, "I happened to be behind you, and I was struck with the beauty of the girl."

And then, suddenly, some sense of how rash her question might be dyed Michelle's face scarlet. Roger, however, recovering his self-possession, replied, —

"It was Bess Lukens, a very honest English girl, of humble condition, who was kind to me when I was in prison, and for whom I have a profound respect. Like many of our English, she drifted to St. Germain's, but she has been luckier than most. She has a fine natural voice, and Monsieur Mazet, of the King's Opera, has offered to teach her singing. She is living with Madame Michot at the inn and working there for her living, until she learns something of the French language, then she goes to Monsieur Mazet's house in Paris, to live with his old sister and to learn to sing and act."

An "honest English girl of humble condition." Michelle had no idea of how very humble Bess's condition was. The whole story had a pretty and romantic sound to Michelle's ears. She knew the English were very much less conventional than the French, and far more sentimental in their feelings, though not overflowing with it in words. Instantly the thought flashed through her mind that Bess Lukens was really going to Paris to be educated, and when that was done Roger would marry her.

Michelle said nothing more, but, the music striking up in the dancing saloon, permitted Roger to lead her

Roger Meets Good and Ill Fortune

out to dance. And as she danced she was saying to herself, —

“What a pity it is! — he a gentleman, so graceful, courtly, and polished, and she a common girl, whose beauty will go to seed like a coarse hollyhock. Well, these poor exiles must often find it hard to remember their quality.”

And every time she looked at Roger, when he made her the sweeping bow the dance required, he seemed to her more elegant, more of a courtier. Remember, she had not known him when he could barely write his name, and when Molly the housemaid and the stablemen and gamekeepers were his best friends.

That night, as every time he saw Michelle, Roger felt more and more her power over him, and it began to come home to him, in the most painful way, that he was poor and likely for the present to remain so, — that he was but a commoner, while Michelle was *Mademoiselle the Princess d’Orantia* — and a dozen other drawbacks, miseries, discomforts, and disadvantages, all of which were to him like the sharp points in the iron girdle which poor King James wore secretly for his sins, one day in the week. Not that these things impaired Roger Egremont’s courage, — he continued to fear God and take his own part, according to the motto of the Egremonts, — but they were not pleasant. He still made no effort to see much of Michelle, — his lore in feminine human nature taught him that much, — and besides, he had honor enough left not to plead business with the King as an excuse for not seeing Bess Lukens often, and then find time to haunt the presence of *Mademoiselle d’Orantia*; and the King had especial need of his services then, and would not let him off; so he practised virtue, discretion, and industry under

The House of Egremont

compulsion, which is better than not practising them at all.

The golden September wore on, and brown October came, and on a glorious morning, early in the month, Monsieur Mazet appeared, by appointment, to take Bess Lukens to Paris. Her few belongings were packed up; Madame Michot had paid her liberally for her two months' work, and in good, hard, round, solid gold-pieces. The good woman still disapproved of so excellent a cook and laundress trying the uncertain future of an artist, but her experience with Bess for two months had convinced her that there was no danger in Paris or anywhere else for that robust young woman. Jacques, an honest fellow, who would have been in love with Bess had he not been so mortally afraid of her, presented her with a handsome set of ribbons; and Roger Egremont, taking her off privately, gave her two gold louis d'or.

"'T is all I have to give thee, Bess, except my love and respect, but I give it with a good will."

"Thank you, Roger," replied Bess, returning once more to their old familiar way of speaking. "You have given me that which is worth more to me than money. But for you, I should have been still in England, with the words 'gaoler's girl' hanging to me like the ball and chain they put to a felon. But thanks to you, I am beginning a new life in a new country, with all that ugly past behind me; no one but you knows what that past is—but you and Mr. Dicky, and he, good soul, will never tell it any more than you will."

It did not need Bess's inadvertent admission for Roger to know that he had been the cause of her coming to France.

Madame Michot was then heard calling excitedly from

Roger Meets Good and Ill Fortune

the orchard, and Bess and Roger appeared. There was a gate at the bottom of the orchard, opening into a lane which led to the highroad, and by that way Bess was to start. She had looked for a saddle with a pillion to take Papa Mazet and herself to Paris, but oh, glory!—there, at the open gate, stood a coach, a great lumbering house of a thing, with a pair of post horses to it, and a tall, rawboned saddle-horse besides. And there was not only Papa Mazet and Madame Michot and Jacques, but several of the inn servants and five small boys to see Bess get into the imposing equipage provided for her.

Papa Mazet advanced as Bess followed by Roger came running down the orchard.

“This is for you, mademoiselle,” said Papa Mazet. “I go a-horseback to Paris, but I would not have it said that one with so lovely a voice as yours should enter Paris except in a coach.”

Bess was nearly wild with delight.

“A coach!” she cried. “Me going to Paris in a coach! Bess Lukens a-riding in a coach! I never was in one before” (Poor Bess, in her excitement, said “afore,” but quickly corrected herself); and her eyes shone like stars and she almost wept with joy.

“Come, Bess,” cried Roger, happy in the good soul’s happiness, “let me assist you into the coach, so that you may say with truth that you knew how to get in and out of a coach before ever you saw Paris.”

Bess stepped forward with the greatest alacrity, and Roger handed her in with much ceremony, she holding her head very high, and the warm color mantling her cheeks. And then she sat back and fanned herself with her hand, — a fan was not yet among Bess’s possessions. And having tasted this part of the pleasure,

The House of Egremont

she rose and descended with all the majesty in the world, Roger still ceremoniously assisting, with Monsieur Mazet and Madame Michot admiring and ejaculating, and all the inn servants grinning behind them.

But it was now time to start, if they would make Paris before dark, for the roads were heavy, and the coach made but slow progress at best. Bess therefore kissed Madame Michot, saying to her solemnly, —

“I swear to you I will so act in Paris that you will never be ashamed to say you know me. And I thank you a thousand, thousand times for your goodness to me.”

“’Tis nothing,” graciously replied Madame Michot. “You earned all I did for you and more.”

Then Jacques shuffled forward and said, —

“I go to Paris twice in the week in the cart, and any time you like to come out, why, there’s plenty of room in the cart.”

“I know it—and I’ll come,” cried Bess, shaking Jacques’s hand vigorously.

Madame Michot watched narrowly for any lover-like symptoms on the part of either Roger or Bess at parting. But they parted with the openness and warmth of friendship only, Bess saying, —

“And give my duty and love to Mr. Dicky, and put it in the right words; for though I know exactly how to treat him when I talk with him, yet I don’t know how to send a message to a popish priest that is to be.”

“I will — I will,” cried Roger, and helped her in the coach for the second time. Papa Mazet mounted his tall charger, and they set forth, Bess putting her head out of the window to instruct the postboys to be sure and drive through the principal streets as they left the town.

In truth, dear as Roger was to Bess, the parting,

Roger Meets Good and Ill Fortune

borne so calmly on her part, was robbed of much of its sting. The coach was the outward and visible sign that she had been raised from her ignoble estate, and the thought comforted her simple soul. And St. Germain was but fourteen miles from Paris, and the semi-weekly cart was a great comfort to her mind. So she set forth on her momentous journey with a light heart, and little anticipated a trifling though noisy misadventure which was to befall her before she had been an hour upon the road.

It was a crisp, bright morning, and they had jogged along steadily on the highway, Bess sitting majestically on the back seat of the coach, enjoying herself hugely. It is true that the dazzling color of her cheeks was somewhat paled, and she had certain qualms which the jerky motion of a coach is wont to impart to one unused to it. But Bess had a soul above such trifles, and would have endured the agonies of martyrdom with a high spirit, if only so she could have enjoyed her new and delicious splendors. She was saying to herself for the hundredth time, "To think that I, Red Bess, be riding to Paris in a coach," when there was a violent shock of collision, and Bess found herself almost pitched through the coach window on the highroad. She recovered her lost balance quickly, and then found that a wheel had come off, and her imposing equipage lay ignominiously tip-tilted in the road. Papa Mazet had dismounted from his tall charger, but found himself quite unequal to cope with such a catastrophe; nor could the postilions repair the injury. They had, however, passed the shop of a blacksmith only half a mile back, and Papa Mazet, putting spurs to his tall horse, trotted back to fetch the blacksmith.

Bess chose rather to remain in the coach, tip-tilted

The House of Egremont

as it was; for the equipage was invested with a kind of superstitious reverence in her mind, and she was seriously afraid of bad luck if she once put her foot to the ground before dismounting at Paris. So sitting at an uncomfortable angle, and barricaded with cushions, she prepared to await with patience Papa Mazet's return with help.

Presently there was a great clattering on the road, and a chariot and four, very splendidly equipped, came thundering along, and drew up directly by the side of Bess's disabled equipage; and peering out of the window directly upon Bess was a little, bright-eyed old woman, gorgeously dressed, and powdered. She occupied the whole of the back seat. On the front seat was the dark-eyed, elegant girl that Bess had seen in the meadow first with Roger, and had afterward met in the park, and who was, as Roger said, the Princess Michelle.

"What have we here?" cried Madame de Beaumanoir, in French.

"An accident, madam," replied Bess, in such French as she could muster.

"Why don't you get out of the coach, girl?" asked Madame de Beaumanoir.

"Because I don't choose to," coolly replied Bess.

The presence of Michelle, the calm unconcern with which she surveyed the scene, had in it something irritating to Bess. This was the girl of whom she tried to make Roger Egremont speak and he would not, beyond a few colorless phrases. Bess's own imagination supplied enough to make her dislike Michelle and it lighted a fire in her eyes, and brought the blood to her cheek, at this chance meeting.

Madame de Beaumanoir was quite indignant at

Roger Meets Good and Ill Fortune

Bess's debonair reply, and turning to Michelle, cried in English, —

“Did ever you hear such impudence? Who, think you, the creature is?”

“Miss Lukens!” almost shouted Bess, also in English, and sitting up very straight and putting her head through the window so that she and her adversary, Madame de Beaumanoir, were scarce a foot apart. “That’s who I am; who are you?”

“I,” replied Madame de Beaumanoir, very tartly, “am Madame the Duchess of Beaumanoir.”

“Well, Madame the Duchess of Beaumanoir,” replied Bess, whose warm temper was thoroughly aroused by this time, “I would advise you to waste no more time in affairs not your own, but to go about your business.”

“Hold!” said Madame de Beaumanoir, light breaking in upon her; “are not you the English girl who came to St. Germain after young Egremont? Sure,” said the old lady, turning to Michelle, “this is that hussy!”

Bess glared at her adversary for a whole minute. Her face was alternately flushing and paling, and her eyes, although defiant, were brimming over. And suddenly, instead of bursting into a storm of wrath, she fell, quite unexpectedly to herself, into a passion of tears, that flowed like a fountain and drenched her face, and shook her figure with sobs. Bess Lukens was not a woman of many tears; few persons or things could make her weep; but this unlooked-for encounter, this harsh accusation, the feeling that perhaps her coming to St. Germain had cast discredit on the man she loved so deeply and disinterestedly, overpowered her. And there was the woman whom she unconsciously put

The House of Egremont

in the place of a rival, a witness to her distress and humiliation! The world looked very black to Bess Lukens then.

Madame de Beaumanoir, however, was not a woman of evil heart, though of unbridled tongue, and she was sorry at the sight of the pain she had given. Like most persons of her condition and of her time, she thought the common people provided with a set of feelings entirely different from their betters, and did not suppose that Bess would object to being called a hussy, or to be accused of following Roger Egremont anywhere. Seeing her mistake in this case, she was willing to make amends. But before she could speak, Michelle leaned forward and said, in a very kind voice, to Bess, —

“I think Madame de Beaumanoir is mistaken. I have heard that you are a most respectable girl, and very gifted in singing. And Mr. Roger Egremont has spoken of you to me, — a thing he would scarcely have done, did you not indeed have his respect.”

The words astonished Bess Lukens. She shared Madame de Beaumanoir's notions concerning the gulf which separated gentle and simple, and the idea had never dawned upon her mind that a woman in Michelle's position could care about the feelings of a woman at the other end of the scale. Bess looked up, her amazement checking her tears, and in Michelle's black eyes she saw kindness, good-will, all that makes women sisters. She reached forth her hand, and took Michelle's — it was hard to say which woman's hand was advanced first.

“I thank you,” said Bess, with perfect dignity. “I was a fool to let an idle, malicious word upset me so. *But 't was the first time I ever had such a thing said*

Roger Meets Good and Ill Fortune

to my face, though God knows many might have said it behind my back. I scorn to defend myself, but I cannot let a loyal gentleman, like Mr. Roger Egremont, who has been my friend, be traduced for me. If he had been what some persons think, would the Duke of Berwick have asked Madame Michot to take me in her house? Would Monsieur Mazet, with whom I am now going to Paris, offer to take me under his roof, with his sister, while I study singing? And all these things are of common repute in St. Germain's."

Bess had steadily refrained from addressing Madame de Beaumanoir, and looked straight into Michelle's eyes. The two women felt not the smallest warming of the heart one to the other, but an instant and perfect respect. Madame de Beaumanoir, however, was not a person to be ignored, and at this stage of the proceedings, she put in her word.

"Now I remember, my nephew François, who collects all the news for me, — that is, such news as a poor rag of a man like him can collect, — told me that it was all pure invention about you and Roger Egremont, and that you were perfectly well behaved and not above your station. I am sorry I called you a hussy."

Bess bowed haughtily.

Madame de Beaumanoir continued with animation:

"But I should like to know how any girl of your condition, and with your good looks — for you are a handsome baggage if ever I saw one — there, there, don't fly out — I should like to know, I say, how you *dare* to remain virtuous? 'Twas not so in the days of my ever dear and blessed King Charles, who is now an angel in heaven. Why, the greatest ladies in the land didn't care a button about virtue! Well, I say, the world is continually growing more topsy-turvy and out-

The House of Egremont

landish, and when a girl like you — a London tradesman's daughter, no doubt — prates about her virtue and respectability, and flames up because a woman of quality calls her a hussy, I don't know what we shall come to!"

"All I have to say, madam," said Bess in reply, "is, that I hold my name as dear as my betters; and as for your ever dear and blessed King Charles, I have always heard he was a great rascal where women were concerned."

"Drive on, coachman!" screamed Madame de Beaumanoir, in much horror and indignation; and her coach rolled off, leaving Bess Lukens victor on the field of battle.

The postilions, as well as Madame de Beaumanoir's footmen, had very much enjoyed this bout, and were sorry when it came to an end by Madame de Beaumanoir's departure, and Monsieur Mazet's arrival with the smith. In half an hour, the wheel was repaired, — Bess steadily refusing, from superstitious and other motives, to leave the coach; and sunset saw her arrived at the Porte Saint Martin, then unfinished. The size and height of the houses of Paris delighted her, and especially, the novelty of seeing the streets lighted at night by lanterns strung across on ropes. And she saw more coaches in her drive to Monsieur Mazet's house than she had ever seen in all her life before.

Arrived at her new home, she found it a tall old house, surrounded by other tall old houses in the Rue Mazarin, and dismounting and entering, she found Mademoiselle Mazet, a tall old lady, who received her kindly. There were innumerable spinets and harpsichords about, and stringed instruments of all sorts, and piles of manuscript music. Bess had a famous appetite *for supper*, but was ready to weep with disappointment

Roger Meets Good and Ill Fortune

when she was set down to eggs, a bit of fish, and a very small ragoût, mostly vegetables. Her hosts were somewhat appalled by her appetite ; nevertheless, Bess went hungry to bed. She determined, however, if necessary, to starve, in order to learn to sing. She slept well, as people do whose digestions and consciences are in perfect condition, and next morning she made the glorious discovery that in her voice, as trained by Papa Mazet, she had an everlasting source of joy and comfort.

Papa Mazet was delighted with his pupil, from the very first lesson he gave her. Her strong young body was a fit abode for her powerful and delicious voice.

While the reading of books had ever been more pain than pleasure to her, she learned to read music with surprising quickness, and even to accompany herself on the spinet and harpsichord. Mademoiselle Mazet was equally pleased with her, for Bess was quite incapable of airs, and asked no waiting on, which would have been more of a novelty than a pleasure to her. Then, as soon as she found herself at home, her native and ineradicable sense of order and cleanliness asserted itself. From keeping her own room exquisitely neat, she came to take charge of the dark old house. In a little while the cobwebs of a century had been ruthlessly swept out, the dust of ages had been sent along with the cobwebs, the piles of music were put in decent order, the instruments primly ranged against the wall, unused windows were opened, and light, cleanliness, and comfort reigned in Monsieur Mazet's house. From keeping the house in order, she insensibly came to looking after the household affairs, when she discovered that the Mazets were regularly and systematically cheated by their servants and tradespeople. Bess sent for two or three of the worst of them, the candle merchant, the wood mer-

The House of Egremont

chant, and the butcher, and descending majestically to the kitchen, harangued them forcibly in such French as she could command, eked out with very vigorous English. And being naturally of a hot temper, she indulged it, and was secretly pleased to find that her dramatic outburst had actually frightened the cheats extremely. Monsieur Mazet, listening anxiously at the head of the stairs, had more than one cause of congratulation at the panic with which she inspired the dishonest tradespeople, and the tragic tone with which she threatened them. After having dismissed them, trembling, Bess came upstairs laughing. Monsieur Mazet ran forward, and clasped her hands with delight.

"And was it truly acting, my child?" he cried. "If it was, you have a great dramatic genius, and you will be able to act as well as sing!"

"I don't know that it was *all* acting," diplomatically replied Bess, "but I think I scared them pretty well, and I want to look in the dictionary and find some more hard names that I can call them next time. I don't know half enough."

When she had been in Paris about a month, one morning Roger Egremont dismounted from his horse Merrylegs at the Mazets' door, and Bess, seeing him from the window, ran and let him in.

Roger was glad to see her so well and happy. Bess examined him critically, but saw no change in him. Roger had learned the lesson of self-possession well, and no one could tell from his countenance when things were going ill with him. He showed the same old kindness in his manner to her, brought her many messages from Madame Michot, and wished to know every particular of Bess's welfare.

She told him all, and when Roger laughed at some of

Roger Meets Good and Ill Fortune

the things she told him, she smiled a sly and pretty smile at him. But growing serious, she said, —

“Papa Mazet says I must not be Bess Lukens any longer, — that when people begin to hear of me as a singer, they will laugh at so homely a name, — but I must be Elisa Luccheni. The trouble is, that I can write ‘Bess Lukens’ so easy, and to have to learn to write that other name, ’t will be monstrous troublesome.”

“Monsieur Mazet is right,” said Roger, laughing, “And I will write Elisa Luccheni for you, so you may learn to write it yourself.” And taking his tablets from his pocket he wrote her new name most beautifully and gave it to her, which Bess thankfully accepted.

And then she had to tell him all the occurrences, great and small, which had befallen her in Papa Mazet’s house, including her victory over the tradespeople, and the full regeneration of the premises, under the influence of soap and water.

“I’ve washed everything in the house, Master Roger, except Papa and Mamma Mazet — for that’s what the good souls wish me to call them — and I have a great mind to put them in a great pail of water and to scrub them both well. And as for the servants and tradespeople, ’t would do your heart good to see how afraid of me they are.” Here Bess’s red lips parted in a broad smile. “You know my voice is pretty loud and full anyway, and it’s more so since I have got to doing trillos and roulades and such, — and I give ’em the benefit of it. And then I’ve learned a couple of dozen hard words out of the dictionary, and when I bring ’em out — Lord! how it makes their teeth rattle in their heads with fear!”

Plainly she was happy and well employed, — but not so absorbed in her new life as to be forgetful of her

The House of Egremont

older friends. She wanted to know all about Madame Michot. Jacques had been to see her twice in the cart. And how was Mr. Dicky? Roger satisfied her on all those points. When it came to his own affairs, he told her glibly enough a number of things; that he feared the King would have to disband the gentlemen-at-arms; that the King gave him much writing to do, and the Queen made him go to church oftener than was altogether agreeable; and, in short, spoke freely of all his affairs, except the most important one — how his heart lay. He never once mentioned the Princess Michelle's name, and if he knew of the encounter in the highroad, he kept his own counsel about it.

Roger passed a pleasanter hour with Bess than he had yet spent with her in France, and then had an interview with Papa Mazet, who returned home. Bess scurried out of the way as he came in.

"Well, monsieur," cried Papa Mazet before Roger could speak. "Our postulant is getting on finely. Such a voice! such volume! — it increases daily. And she is, what so few girls of her condition are, a natural actress. The women of the people are not trained to self-control, and they rarely learn it. Your fine ladies are the ones to learn acting quickly, for they are taught to play a part as soon as they can speak. They know how to smile when they are inwardly tormented with vexation; to remain calm in the midst of provocation and tumult; to see ridiculous things without smiling and heart-rending things without weeping. And hark you, Monsieur Egremont, this girl of ours is very prudent where men are concerned. She seems well versed in the art of keeping them at a distance."

"That is true," gravely replied Roger. "I know of an *English* gentleman who once dared an impertinence

Roger Meets Good and Ill Fortune

with her, and she gave him in return a whack with a broom-handle, of which he will bear the scar to his dying day."

"'Tis a blessed thing for her that she is of that mind," answered Papa Mazet, "for she will have to keep many at bay as soon as she appears in public."

CHAPTER VIII

WHEREIN THE PRINCESS MICHELLE IS PUT IN THE
WAY OF SECURING THE DESTINY OF WHICH SHE
HAS LONG DREAMED

BEING a changed man since last he was free, Roger Egremont had to learn himself all over, as it were. He had been stupidly surprised, at his first coming to St. Germain, that men had time for anything but preparing to return to England. He came, in time, to the melancholy belief, like the rest of his compatriots, that they would do no more fighting for James II. The next blow they struck would be for James III.; and he was a child not yet five years old! Nor did this sad conviction bring them to moroseness and despair, but rather to dancing, drinking, and fiddling. For men circumstanced as they were must seek forgetfulness, or else die of chagrin and weariness. So there was perpetual merry-making going on,—a masque, or a ball with a couple of fiddlers to make music, followed by a scant supper, or a holiday in the woods, and the ever gay inn of Michot. There was a general invitation to Versailles, and often special ones to Marly, given by the French King to the exiles of St. Germain; and as these people were full of gratitude towards him for his generosity to their master, King James, they sometimes went. But it was a costly business in carriages and fees and the like, and money was a scarce commodity. from the *palace of St. Germain* down to the humblest abode of

The Princess Michelle's Destiny

exiles there. So the crowds of them stayed tolerably close to the village, which they had invaded in such numbers as to make a populous town. Roger Egremont was in the thick of all that was going on ; and if sometimes, as he lingered under the quiet stars, returning from an evening of revelling, or walked in the dusky autumn twilight through the leafless alleys of the forest of St. Germain's, he thought dismally of the future, and saw that no headway was being made toward a restoration, he presently shook off his uneasy feelings, whistled a lively air, and tried to be as unthinking as the rest. At all events, it was much better than Newgate ; that was Roger's everlasting consolation.

After the first dazzling delight of his freedom, he had returned to books. Once more they became the chief pleasure of his life. But he turned to them with altered feelings. Two years ago, they had been all in all. Now he had human companionships and friendships. Some of them, like that of the Duke of Berwick, Roger esteemed as a liberal education. He did not see Dicky very often, who had returned to studying, and his cousin Hilary was no more at St. Germain's. His cousins of the Sandhills he did not desire to see, after a certain encounter with two of them in the courtyard of the palace one autumn evening. There they were, Giles and Edward Egremont, reeling about the courtyard, arm in arm, roaring drunk, and bawling and hiccuping for the King. The Queen came to the window, saw these two poor tipsy gentlemen, and turned away sorrowfully. Roger, who was leaning out of a window in the Hall of Guards, ran down and collaring the two of them, carried them off to the inn, where, both of them tumbling into Roger's bed, they were soon snoring. By night they had sobered up enough to appear in the common room,

The House of Egremont

where cards were produced, and as Dicky had said of the Sandhills Egremonts long ago, they gambled the shirts off their backs. They lost all their money, and actually wished to pledge their swords and coats, but could find no takers. Roger was no ascetic, and was not above cards and dice and a bowl of good liquor himself, as far as a gentleman might go in those days — which was considerably beyond what the present day allows. But he was no such man at cards and drink as his cousins, and was glad enough to pack them off to Paris, with all the money he could lay his hands on, as an inducement for them to go. There was another cousin of his, Anthony Egremont, who was a gloomy, fanatical man, not given to free living, but almost as offensive as his brothers, in his own morose, disagreeable way, to Roger. It was a misery to Roger that he could not pension these people off, and so get rid of the sight of their follies and improprieties. He was a man of a free and open hand, and one of his greatest pleasures, during the little while he had enjoyed his estate, was to give generously. He had done so, not only to Hugo and to little Dicky, but to scores of other persons. And how easy and pleasant it was, when money was plentiful, and his giving in no way stinted himself, to play the prince! He had given Dicky a fine bay filly, as good a horse as there was in England, but he had half a dozen equally as good standing in his stables. Roger could not get over a certain lordly habit of mind which accorded ill with the pittance from the King on which he had to live. The King's manner of giving it was calculated to teach Roger the vanity of earthly wishes. He would be sent for to the royal closet privately, once a month, when the King would gently put a little packet *in his hand*, with some words of fatherly good-will; and

The Princess Michelle's Destiny

this poor, unsuccessful King had so much of dignity in his sorrows, so much of gentleness toward his enemies, that Roger would be overwhelmed with the majestic picture of a good man bearing misfortune nobly. Had James Stuart been half the king in England he was in France, he might have kept his throne, and not a tithe of the people who followed him into poverty and exile, and remained with him, would have followed his successors under the same circumstances.

Whenever Roger Egremont went abroad, it was with the hope of meeting Mademoiselle d'Orantia. His eyes, as keen as they were bright, kept a continual lookout for her. Sometimes he met her at the château ; occasionally he went to Madame de Beaumanoir's rare routs, and each one of these meetings was a distinct epoch to Roger Egremont.

Oftenest they met walking upon the terrace in the afternoon, with great crowds of people sunning themselves in the mild autumn light, and looking down upon the meadows, green even at the fall of the leaf. Michelle would on those occasions, generally be walking with Madame de Beaumanoir, who never failed to snatch Roger, and who paid him the highest compliment she could command, by saying, —

"He's the most delicious, impudent fellow I have seen since Charles the Second's time. François, do you model yourself upon this young man, and you will be a man of spirit yet."

Roger always fell an easy prey to the old lady at these times, for the sake of a word with Michelle. He would drop behind and say to her, —

"How sweet are the meadows to-day, mademoiselle. There is good grass there now, both for horses and cattle."

The House of Egremont

At this, Michelle would smile, — a lovely smile that began in her eyes and ended on her lips, showing a faint, elusive dimple in her creamy cheek, not like the dimples in Bess Lukens's rosy face. Roger's conversation about grass for man and beast was certainly unlike that of most gentlemen who live at court. Yet was he so far from a rustic that he knew more of books than any man at St. Germain's. Michelle was wise enough to see that nothing escaped Roger Egremont's watchful eye, — neither the growth of the grass in the meadow nor the politics of Europe. Their conversation always drifted to books, and they had a standing quarrel as to the relative merits of Shakespeare and Molière.

"But your Molière was a thief; he stole from Terence, from Plautus, from almost every one of the Roman dramatists," Roger would say, with a sarcastic smile, to Michelle.

"As for your mighty Shakespeare," that young lady would cry scornfully, "he stole from the whole world. I myself have read stories writ long before he was born, out of which I am certain he made his plays!"

Once, in one of these pleasant wrangles, as they leaned over the parapet of the terrace, on a cold, bright December afternoon, Roger poured out to her the story of his life at Newgate, and how ignorant he was when he went into that gloomy place. They were as much alone as if they had been in the depths of the forest, although all about them were crowds of people. The King of France with his great suite was on the terrace that day, gravely promenading with the Queen of England, and a mob of well dressed persons followed them.

Madame de Beaumanoir, with her coach drawn up at the end of the terrace, sat within it muffled in furs. The *coach door* was open, and ladies and gentlemen stopped

The Princess Michelle's Destiny

and spoke to her, and lingered to hear François read aloud some very profane verses, which caused the poor young man to shudder visibly. But Madame de Beaumanoir would by no means let him off, and she cackled with delight at his sufferings. Michelle, who did not care for the class of literature which Madame de Beaumanoir affected, spying Roger strolling along alone, shot him a glance that brought him instantly to her side. She would walk about a little, she said, if Mr. Egremont would escort her. Mr. Egremont, coloring very deeply with pleasure, handed her out of the coach. Presently they were leaning together over the iron railings, and looking down upon the river, that glittered like steel in the bright December afternoon.

As usual, they fell upon books, not the wild romances upon which the court ladies fed, but something quite different. And then, won by the sympathy in her dark eyes, Roger poured out his tale, how he could scarcely read and write when he went to Newgate.

"And," he said, looking down like a school-boy under her clear gaze, "at first, for a time, I made a beast of myself with drink and gambling and low company,—far worse than my cousins, the Egremonts of the Sandhills have done here. You know, mademoiselle, they are reprobates."

"I thought, Mr. Egremont, you would let none abuse your relations," said Michelle, smiling.

"None but myself, mademoiselle, at all events. I will say this for myself—that as long as I was free and could live like a gentleman, I behaved myself as such. 'Twas nothing but the agony of my untrained mind—the fears and miseries of an ignorant, unlettered man—which drove me to evil ways in Newgate prison. From them, books, under God's grace, rescued me.

The House of Egremont

Why should I not love books and be forever grateful to them?"

When next they met, it was at an evening levee in the grand saloon at the château at Christmas time. The poor exiles tried to make an English Christmas, as far as they could. Not even evergreens were cheap in France, — where all growing wood is dear, — but they managed to have some holly and cedar to trim the saloon with, and a great Yule log in the fireplace, and a bowl of good liquor flowing. There were healths proposed by the King and Queen, and Berwick gave the health of the Prince of Wales, the little lad standing upon the table and clapping his tiny hands with pleasure; and afterwards there was dancing to a couple of fiddles, and Roger had the heavenly bliss of leading Michelle out and dancing with her. Then, after the dance was over, and Roger had paid her the compliment always observed at St. Germain's, — "I hope, madam, I shall have the pleasure of dancing with you one day before his Majesty at the palace of Whitehall," — they stood together in one of the deep windows, and looked out upon the gardens and terrace and meadows bathed in the white radiance of the December moon. And Michelle, who seemed determined to know all about Roger's past, said, —

"Is this anything like your English home?"

That was enough; Roger poured out his story of Egremont, the place he loved so well, and then inevitably, he told of Hugo. Roger Egremont, although gifted with that natural eloquence which made men and women listen to him closely when he talked, was yet not one of those talkers whose tongue is tied to no ear but his own. He was keen enough to see that *the Princess* was deeply interested in what he had to

The Princess Michelle's Destiny

say. In truth, she was more ; she observed that he had a good and graceful air in speaking, that he used gestures sparingly, but at the right time, that his voice, although soft, as became a gentleman, was rich and had a ring in it, and that his eyes were full of fire, — in short, all those little points which a woman notes in a man who pleases her ; and then, when Roger stopped, with a delicious feeling of having made headway in her regard, she suddenly asked him the most disconcerting, appalling, uncomfortable, awkward, and embarrassing question of his whole life. Also, it was a question upon which Michelle had very accurate, although not very complete knowledge, and her question was directly inspired by the devil.

“ And when and where, Mr. Egremont, did you make the acquaintance of that beautiful young woman, Miss Lukens, whom, I understand, you have befriended, and who is studying to sing in the King's Opera ? ”

No dog marked for hanging ever had a more shame-faced look than Roger Egremont at these words. Had he been the damnablest of villains, he could not have appeared more of a poltroon. In truth had he been a villain, he would have shown a brazen assurance. Instead of which, he turned very red, shuffled his feet on the floor, looked wildly and foolishly about him, and in short, made the poorest possible figure that a man of sense could. Only one thing was clear to him — that Michelle must be well assured that his relations with Bess Lukens were altogether innocent, else she would never have mentioned her name to him ; but that only opened the way to the dreadful thought that Michelle might think him capable of marrying Bess. And he could by no means reveal poor Bess's secret, that she was the gaoler's girl — and in short, was ever

The House of Egremont

a gentleman more miserably placed by a single indiscreet question of the lady of his heart? He could only manage to stammer, "I — I — knew Miss Lukens first in Newgate prison;" and then, seeing a look of astonishment in Michelle's black eyes, a lie which was half a truth, and served the purpose of a truth came to him, like an inspiration from heaven.

"Her uncle was in the prison," he said boldly. "'T was through him I first met her. She is the honestest girl alive, and the least likely to grow above her station." At which the Princess very calmly, and with intent to torture him, told the story of Bess and the coach and Madame de Beaumanoir, — told it so archly that the wretched Roger was forced to laugh.

"And I think," added the Princess, with sudden haughtiness, "she showed a very great disposition to forget her station on that occasion — not but that she had much provocation," she added, remembering the Duchess's behavior on that day.

When Roger laid himself down at cockcrow on his bed in the garret at Madame Michot's, he could not but admit that the evening had not been on the whole bad for him; and then the thought came to him, as it often did, that were he again master of Egremont, with King James come back to his own, the family of this young lady — this penniless, landless Princess — would not reckon him a match for her; and turning and swearing in his bed, and biting the bedclothes in his helpless rage, he at last fell into sleep, to dream of Michelle.

The next time they spoke together was near a month afterward. Roger had ridden forth on Merrylegs, of a chill and misty January afternoon. He did not take the road to Paris, nor yet those beautifully paved

The Princess Michelle's Destiny

highways between St. Germain and Versailles and Marly, where the equipages of the King of France were continually rolling, and royal messengers booted and spurred were riding hot upon some important errand, concerning a siege or a ballet, and ladies in their coaches lumbered along, and beggars swarmed. Rather took he the road toward Verneuil, which led through a wooded country, and was quiet and little frequented.

He felt downcast on that afternoon. Berwick had given him a hint that it might be necessary to disband the corps of gentlemen-at-arms. The French people were not over pleased at the spectacle of a body of troops in France, organized under the flag of England — and besides, the poor King had no money to pay them. But they would be permitted to keep their organization as a company of private soldiers, and fight for King Louis, if so it pleased them. The thought of fighting was by no means displeasing to Roger Egremont, even should he fight with a pike or a halberd in his hand instead of a sword; but it showed to him what he earnestly tried to shut his eyes to, — how far, far off was that return to England, and how long must Hugo Stein, the bastard, keep warm the place of a better man.

Turning these sad thoughts over in his mind, Roger trotted along on Merrylegs, — a good horse, but one which Roger would have mounted his groom upon at Egremont, he thought, no horse being ever so good as those he bred himself upon his own land. The high-road was deserted, except for a solitary cart once in a while, and a jolly beggar or two, making haste toward that beggar's paradise — Paris. But Roger wished to be more solitary yet, and when some miles from St. Germain turned into a by-road that led through de-

The House of Egremont

serted fields and melancholy woods. It was growing toward dusk, and a warm mist was rising and making the cloudy afternoon yet darker. Presently, Merrylegs, having his own sweet will, the reins lying idly on his neck while his master mused, turned into a road little used, and bordered by sombre poplars, gaunt and bare. The way led up to rising ground, with a little hill at the top, where the poplars ended and scattered pines and cedars grew dismally. Roger raised his eyes and surveyed the dull and misty landscape before him, — so lonely, so deserted, a few peasants' huts in the distance being the only thing that indicated human habitation, — and silhouetted against the dun sky on the hill-top was a figure on horseback; he recognized instantly that graceful head, with a hat and feathers, the slight figure sitting erect, yet easily. It was Michelle — but what was she doing so far away from home and alone? Roger rode rapidly forward, and as the hoofs of Merrylegs were heard nearing her, the Princess turned her head and recognized the new-comer.

Something in her face ever told Roger, on their meeting, that the sight of him was not displeasing to her. To-day, she smiled and opened her eyes wider, like a person roused from sleep, when Roger spoke.

"May I ask, mademoiselle," he said, "why you are in this desert place, so far from home?"

"By rare good fortune," she said pleasantly, "I rode afar with my cousin François. His horse cast a shoe about a mile away, and he stopped at a peasant's cottage, where he found a man able to do some rude smith's-work, and I came on here, promising to rejoin him. It is good to be away from the crowds of people one encounters in every by-path between Versailles, Marly, and St. Germaines."

The Princess Michelle's Destiny

"If I am in your way —" began Roger, haughtily.

"Not in the least. You, of all the men at St. Germain, can best understand me. I sat here looking at those poor huts in the distance. I suppose that is where the people dwell who hoot the King's coach in the darkness, when it passes along the highway at night. Those people have injuries; yet, what are they, and who can mend them?"

"I can tell you their injuries very quickly, mademoiselle, but I cannot tell you how to mend them. They must be mended though some time. Think you those men, with stout legs and strong arms, will continue to labor forever, and to see the fruit of their toil go in great wildernesses of marble and bronze, like Versailles, with heaps of jewels, and thousands of pictures and statues and coaches and horses, — and all for a few? No; let these rustics but once find out how strong they are, and you will see great changes."

"Do you mean to say our King, the great Louis —" Michelle stopped, offended, but not knowing how to go on.

"I say nothing, mademoiselle, of your King, the great Louis, except that he is not only the most generous king, but the most generous man who ever lived, to those in misfortune; and every man of us at St. Germain — English, Scotch, and Irish — would shed the last drop of our blood for him, for his kindness to our master. But I see that kings and people know little of each other. Our English people knew little of King James, or they would not have turned him out, and less of King William, or they would not have put him in. If I were a king, I should be like your great Henry, — I should wish that every peasant had a fowl in his pot on Sunday. There spoke a great king, nay more, a great

The House of Egremont

man, for he saw the peasant's rude power, and would stop his mouth with a delicate fowl."

Michelle sat musing, her chin in her hands. The two horses rubbed noses, and stamped lightly on the soft, damp earth. The mist was rising and enveloping the lonely landscape.

"Yet, after all, the peasant's lot is not different from that of all humanity."

"I remember, mademoiselle, the very first time I spoke to you. You told me there were only three great true things, — work, pain, and death. We cannot help death, but we can help work and pain."

"I do not think so," she said, gently; "but that by no means releases us from doing our duty. Nay, it only compels us the more. And when we have found what is our duty, — which is not always easy, — we should go to meet it cheerfully, as if it were a friend. I think I have found mine. Yesterday the King sent for me to Marly. He told me something I might do for my country, for him. It involved great pain and loss and disappointment to me; but why should we not go half-way to meet pain, since it searches us out and finds us no matter where we hide, — whether it be in solitude, or in the midst of the greatest court of the greatest king in the world? So I accepted my portion, and will live with it cheerfully, as if it were pleasure."

What did she mean? Roger's natural curiosity made him long to know, but natural courtesy restrained him. One thing he had noticed ever since he had been in France, and had seen French people at close quarters: they had different ideas of patriotism, chivalry, and duty from those he had been bred upon. Where he loved his home and his country, they loved their king; where he revered the laws, they revered their sovereign.

The Princess Michelle's Destiny

He was always coming upon some strange anomaly — for so it seemed to this untravelled gentleman — in them. Yet Michelle was only half French, and the lesser half, it seemed to him. She had not the vanity of a Frenchwoman, who is coquettish even as a wit; she was freer than any woman he knew of a desire to shine; she was quite satisfied to be, instead of to do.

"I hope," he said, diffidently, "that this duty of yours will not take you away from us? Not that our sojourn here is fixed, — we all yearn unspeakably for the day when we shall once more venture our carcasses against the Prince of Orange, — but while we stay — "

"Yes," answered Michelle; "it will take me away, a long journey, and I know not what I shall find at the end. But I am master of my soul, and nothing shall daunt me."

The moon, a slender silver bow, suddenly appeared in the eastern sky, the clouds melting away on the horizon, and the mist stealing off magically. There were lights in the peasants' huts. All at once the scene grew less melancholy.

"Ah!" cried Michelle, with a sudden change in her air, a quick gleam of daring in her eyes, which Roger saw by the faint moonlight, a laugh upon her lips, as she struck her horse smartly with the spur she wore, "we are talking like a couple of death's heads. After all, one must take chances in life. Anything is better than the dull stagnation of mere fine ladies and gentlemen. We may learn a lesson from the poor players in Monsieur Molière's play-house at Paris. Think you any one of them would refuse a great part, a chance to be the chief figure in the events passing around them, from a paltry fear of what might befall in the acting? Certainly they would not. Ambition must be a noble

The House of Egremont

quality, especially when it is not for one's self so much as for one's country. It makes me thrill from head to foot, Mr. Egremont, to think that I, a mere woman, can serve my King and France."

She had gathered up the reins as she gave her horse the spur, and she was now going down the hill at a breakneck speed. Something in the recklessness of her manner of speaking, and the way she urged her horse on gave Roger a strange and poignant feeling that she was not so happy in the prospect of that long journey and absence from France at the King's desire. But all he said was, as they sped onward through the mysterious twilight, —

"Whereever you go, mademoiselle, be it near or far, be it for long or for little, you take with you the everlasting regard of Roger Egremont."

She turned her face away from him as he spoke, and had he not at that very moment caught her horse by the bit, and almost thrown him upon his haunches, Michelle would have been in a ditch which yawned before them, and of which the bridge was gone. She was an accomplished horsewoman, and quickly recovered herself; but her narrow escape from accident did not make her prudent. Rather did she ride faster and more recklessly. Roger determined that Merrylegs should keep up with her, if he had to buy another horse the next day. They passed, at a sweeping gallop, the cottage where François's horse was standing. The poor youth was just putting his foot into the stirrup, and he had hard work to catch up with them, so hard were they riding.

"We shall find Madame de Beaumanoir much displeased with us," he cried, panting, as he followed after *them*, belaboring his poor beast.

The Princess Michelle's Destiny

"No, no," cried Michelle, turning her head, and letting her horse follow his own lead, except for a restraining hand laid upon her bridle by Roger. "Tell her that you were drinking at a wayside tavern, or studying some ribald verses of Villon, or any other form of — of — gayety, and she will forgive you."

It seemed as if the recklessness in Roger's blood had communicated itself to Michelle. Never before had Roger seen her so full of wild spirits. Their horses kept up a rattling pace, and, good rider though she was, she would have come to grief more than once, but for Roger's watchful eyes and ever-ready hand. When they slackened their pace a little, to blow their horses, she laughed and talked with a heedless gayety quite new in her, and even sang the song that Dicky Egremont liked so much, about

"Amis, passons-le gaiement!"

"Poor François," she said, laughing, "he and I should exchange identities. I should be the man. I love to ride thus, far and fast by night; I fear nothing."

"Because nothing has ever befallen you, mademoiselle," answered Roger. "'T would make me very unhappy to know that you rode thus alone by night. No road is safe after dark. The beggars by day are foot-pads by night."

"Well, then, if they stopped me, I should tell them plainly that I carried neither money nor valuables with me when I rode."

"But they might take your horse —"

"Let them try."

"And insult you —"

"I should talk to them so that they would be enchanted. For, look you, like yourself, I believe the vulgar have souls."

The House of Egremont

It was eight o'clock at night before they parted at a turning in the forest, Michelle going with François to the château, and Roger to the castle.

"Good-bye, Mr. Egremont," she said, catching his hand in her little one, and holding it fast, "I shall not forget this ride."

"Nor shall I, as long as I live," replied Roger, in a tone that spoke all he felt, and François coming up then, they cried out, "Adieu," gayly, and Merrylegs's hoofs were soon clattering over the stony streets of St. Germain's.

Roger threw his bridle to the groom waiting at the entrance to the castle, and swaggered into the guard-room. He felt exhilarated, excited. Three hours of the company of Mademoiselle d'Orantia had acted upon him like wine. Berwick was standing by the fireplace, in which the oak logs blazed redly, — the gentlemen pensioners of King James would do much for him, but they would not economize in fuel.

"What good thing has befallen you, Mr. Roger Egremont?" called out Berwick, as Roger advanced to the fireplace, holding the bare blade of his sword in his hand, and nervously bending it until the point and hilt were close together.

"The greatest good in the world, — the free, unrestrained company of the charmingest woman on earth for three whole hours;" and then, seeing laughter and misunderstanding in the faces of those about him, he turned a scowling front toward them, and said in a loud voice, —

"I met Mademoiselle d'Orantia out riding, and came home in her company."

At which there was an instant change. No one spoke or thought lightly of the Princess Michelle.

The Princess Michelle's Destiny

It was supper time, and the gentlemen of the King's guard had a very jolly mess-room adjoining the Hall of Guards. But Roger was in no mood for the company of the gentlemen who had just laughed at him, and was pleased when Berwick said to him, —

"Come, go with me to the inn, where we can have supper. I have something to tell you."

Roger, again putting on his cloak and hat, went forth into the night. When they had traversed the terrace, and were going down the hillside toward Madame Michot's, Berwick spoke.

"You have a fine taste for adventure, my game-chick; so let me tell you where I have spoken a good word for you. To-day the King sent for me, and told me that the King of France wanted my services upon a journey; and the King wished me to oblige his French Majesty. I went at once to Marly, where I was introduced into the King's cabinet, or, rather, into Madame de Maintenon's cabinet — devil take the old woman. There she sat, with her everlasting embroidery, listening, listening, listening, — that woman has made her fortune by listening. And the journey is this, — to accompany Madame de Beaumanoir and Mademoiselle the Princess d'Orantia, to the principality of Orlamunde on the Rhine. They go there for a purpose connected with the alliance between France and Bavaria. I am unable to tell you more at present."

"Mademoiselle is the King's ambassador," cried Roger. "I know he thinks highly of her abilities."

"You have it," dryly answered Berwick. "But it would never do to have it known how or why she goes until she is there. Instantly our friend the Prince of Orange, and all the Dutchmen in Holland would be on the alert to circumvent her. Now, you must know, although

The House of Egremont

Orlamunde is but a little principality, yet there are to be found two admirable and easily defended places on its territory for crossing the Rhine. What the King wishes, and what the Elector Palatine wants, is to have those places secretly fortified; and this we cannot do without the consent of the Prince. Now, this is worth a journey there, and by two ladies, escorted by their own servants, and with their kinsman, François Delaunay, would occasion no remark, especially as there is some sort of relationship between Madame de Beaumanoir and the princes of Orlamunde. I am not supposed to be going with them. Oh, no! I go only to the frontier upon military business; once there, I go where I like. The King wants a soldier to explain to the Prince what must be done at those places on the Rhine. I told his Majesty I would go, and on his asking me what company I would take, I asked for you."

Roger remained silent, too dazed, too enraptured to speak. To make a long journey in company with Michelle — that was all his charmed fancy could understand. He was roused from his dream in Paradise by Berwick continuing, —

"I had another reason for this. The gentlemen-at-arms must be dismissed; so our King told me this day, with tears in his eyes. They will keep their organization, and fight in the next campaign as private soldiers, so that you will have a chance to see fighting. But, my poor Roger, I know that your purse is ill lined; and this journey into Orlamunde will give you something wherewith to keep out the cold until you come into your own again."

"My Lord Duke," said Roger, grasping his friend's hand in the darkness, "I think you the truest, most *generous* friend that ever lived. I will go with you to

The Princess Michelle's Destiny

Orlamunde ; and, after that, I will face the devil himself, if only in your company, for I am assured you fear him not ! ”

At the inn of Michot, the news had got abroad of the disbandment of the gentlemen-at-arms. It meant beggary to most of them ; yet they met it as men of courage and adventure meet misfortune, boldly grasping it by the hand, as if it were an old acquaintance, and toasting it with drink and song. Afar off, as Berwick and Roger traversed the way down to the valley, they could hear a roaring chorus, and the thumping of tankards upon the table in the common room, from whose windows the red light gleamed. Since they could not fight the Whigs, they could at least abuse them, and shout in chorus their favorite song, —

“ Ye Whigs are a rebellious lot,
The plague of our poor nation ;
Ye give not God or Cæsar due,
You smell of reprobation.
Your Hogan Mogan foreign things,
God gave them in displeasure ;
You ’ve brought them o’er and made them Kings,
They ’ve drained our blood and treasure.”

By the time Roger and Berwick had reached the doorway, the tune had changed. This time it was in honor of the poor King who could no longer give them their meagre pay.

“ For I love, from my soul, a friend and a bowl,
So here goes a health to our King, brave boys ;
Here ’s a health to our King,
Let every true man sing,
Long live our noble King ! ”

Several Scotch gentlemen among the brave boys were very drunk, and an Irishman and a Yorkshireman were

The House of Egremont

rapidly coming to fisticuffs when Berwick appeared. Respect ever followed his entrance ; the acknowledged son of their King, although a bastard, was so worthy in himself that none failed to do him honor. The two gentlemen who were disputing shook hands, wept maudlin tears, and each called himself a villain for quarrelling with the other. The Scotch gentlemen quieted down. The company became not less merry, but more orderly ; Berwick was no killjoy. They made a night of it ; poor human nature requires some solace, and these unfortunate gentlemen had but little. Roger Egremont did not reach his garret until two o'clock. He stood looking out upon the quiet stars before he threw himself into his bed. He began to think he should never see Egremont again, and it tortured him ; and then he thought of the journey with Michelle, and his pain was turned to a joy so keen, so penetrating, so agitating, that it was more painful than pain itself.

CHAPTER IX

“I WISH YOU TO COME WITH ME”

NEVER was there a man born who loved better to be revenged on his enemies than Roger Egremont. He was so constituted that he could not feel forgiveness for an enemy until he had that enemy under his heel, which is not forgiveness at all. Therefore, when a few nights after Berwick had told him of the necessary disbandment of the corps, Roger tasted exquisite joy on being selected to compose a letter meant for William of Orange, and likely to give him a bad quarter of an hour.

The determination of the corps of gentlemen-at-arms to enlist as a company of private soldiers in the army of the King of France had been speedily conveyed to London, where everything that happened at St. Germain was known as fast as horses' legs and the winds of heaven could carry it. The news of this determination made a profound and painful impression in England. The spectacle of the best blood of the three kingdoms serving in the mean capacity of common foot-soldiers in a foreign army was not calculated to foster good-will toward the Dutch Prince who sat at St. James's. William of Orange, one of the wisest, as well as one of the most ruthless men who ever reigned, saw this was no time for ruthlessness. He had seen himself stripped by degrees of the absolute power he once owned, his Dutch guards

The House of Egremont

sent packing, the estates he had so liberally bestowed upon his followers taken away and given to their rightful owners by act of parliament, — that parliament which had ever proved too strong for any sovereign who defied it. It would be well to spare the country the sight of English, Irish, and Scotch gentlemen serving in the ranks, and so a cordial invitation was sent to these men to return to their country, submit peaceably to the existing régime, and let bygones be bygones.

Roger Egremont and all the rest of the corps almost loved Dutch William for giving them the opportunity, in reply to this proposal, to concoct a letter as impudent as they could make it. While not written to William of Orange, it was certain to be seen by his eye; and it was not meant to increase his self-esteem.

Roger Egremont, by reason of his fair handwriting and skill in composition, was selected to draft the letter, — the same Roger Egremont who had been as ignorant as a footman of reading and writing until Dutch William put him in the way of getting an education. Roger hated this usurping Prince as a man of free and haughty temper hates his despoiler, but he made not the mistake of undervaluing the usurper. He knew that, although William of Orange was not troubled with a conscience, or with nice points of honor, and needs must hate the English people who had cut his claws so effectively, he was yet susceptible of shame at his offers of amnesty being derided and his promises disbelieved. So it was with unction that Roger read over the draft of his letter, as he made his way one gloomy winter night to the Hall of Guards.

All of the corps were assembled, with General Buchan, their commander, together with Berwick, the Earl of *Perth*, and Lord Melfort and other gentlemen of the

“I Wish You to Come with Me”

King's suite; and in the grand saloon above, a company of the most distinguished of the exiles, chiefly ladies, had collected to applaud the unflinching loyalty of the corps.

Roger was a little late — what young man, singled out for such an honor as to compose the reply to such an offer, would not have been late and would not have relished the shout of welcome his fellows gave him, when he entered, his paper in his hand? Then, bowing modestly to the company, he waited to be invited to read what he had written; and General Buchan, sitting at the head of the great table brought in from the mess-room, around which the corps sat, motioned Roger to take place by him.

Ranged round the wall were the gentlemen of the suite and others; and Roger Egremont, standing up, straight and graceful, his gray body-coat showing off his well made figure, read out, in a clear, ringing voice, the letter he thought fittest to meet the eye of his arch enemy, William of Orange.

“The King of France hath been kind to our master, King James, and we will fight for the King of France so long as we have a drop of blood to spend. And we may be pardoned for hesitating to accept the offers of the Prince of Orange, and preferring to take our chances in the campaign, remembering the fate of those who relied upon the promises of the Prince of Orange. Dundee and the clans fought bravely and died on the field of battle. Glencoe and his people took the oaths, became loyal and obedient servants, lived peaceably and quietly under the established government, yet they were inhumanly massacred. Now, which has the best on it? Was it not better for us to come to France and live sparingly on what our master, King James, could allow us, and when he can no

The House of Egremont

longer support us, to go to the wars, and fight bravely for our master's friend and ours, King Louis of France, than to accept the word of the Prince of Orange, and be—Glencoe'd?"

Roger made a little pause before the last word; it was a new one, coined by himself; and when he suddenly roared it out,—all the other insults to William of Orange he had spoken in a soft and dulcet voice,—there was a moment's pause of surprised delight and rapture; and then broke forth a thundering shout that made the ladies in the saloon above them jump, and even startled King James reading his book of prayers in his closet with the Queen.

Roger stood, his eyes cast down, blushing like a girl, while the applause surged about him like a hurricane, men pounding the table and shouting, "Aye—be Glencoe'd—Glencoe'd; how the damned villain will hate that word!" and General Buchan shook Roger's hand, and Berwick clasped him in his arms crying, "Glencoe'd! What a glorious word!"

Pity Roger Egremont. That one word, and the platter of beans dashed into the usurper's face were his sole recompense for a great estate filched from him, three years in Newgate gaol, and poverty and exile.

The story of the bean platter was known at St. Germain, and when the echoes of the first wild huzza were dying away, another one was started by General Buchan dryly remarking, "Would you not like to add, Mr. Egremont, that the memory of a certain platter of beans—"

He got no further, a storm of shouts and cheers breaking forth, and Roger colored higher than ever.

Then the signature of every man of the corps was signed to the paper, General Buchan's first, followed

"I Wish You to Come with Me"

by those of the officers, and Roger Egremont was accorded the honor of putting his name next those of the officers. He signed himself, with a great flourish, as "Roger Egremont of Egremont." That, too, he hoped would be at least a pin-prick to his enemy.

The proceedings being over, every man went about his business, most of them to the grand saloon. Roger was, of course, the hero of the evening. Berwick took the King a copy of the letter, which the poor broken man read, with a kind of dismal pleasure, aloud to the Queen, whose beautiful eyes flashed with gratification. When he entered the saloon, the King and Queen at once sent for him to the top of the room, where they sat on a very low dais,—James and Mary Beatrice chafed under the rigid ceremonial imposed upon them by French etiquette, and much preferred to sit and stand and walk about among their people as they had done at their palace of Whitehall.

"Mr. Egremont," said the King, "you wield not only a stout arm, but a pen like a sword."

"And keen pens are scarcer than stout arms," added Mary Beatrice, with her heavenly smile, at which Roger bowed to the ground, saying,—

"Both my arm and my pen belong to your Majesties and the Prince of Wales, as long as I have a drop of blood in my body."

Being dismissed with a gracious bow, he turned and saw the Princess Michelle's soft, glowing eyes fixed upon him with a look which spelled as plain as print, "Come to me."

He went to her, and thrilled with delight, when she spoke some words of enchanting praise. Then Madame de Beaumanoir's shrill voice cleft the air, and Roger was obliged to go to where the old lady sat and held court

The House of Egremont

in a great chair by the fire, their Majesties having left the saloon.

"So you've made a great success with that impudent letter of yours. Well, I always thought you capable of it, you rogue!" Then, lowering her voice, she continued, "I know about you and Berwick going to Orlamunde with me and my niece. But—'fore God!—" Madame de Beaumanoir occasionally used language not unlike Bess Lukens's—"will you believe it?—the King of France has not told me one word of what we are going for, except that it will be for the advantage of my family, and I am not to know until the very day we start. But I suspect what is in the wind, and could give as good a guess as one would want. The thing that nettles me is, some of these fools about here say that the King won't let me be told for fear I'll blab; as if I had not always been renowned for keeping my own counsel! Well, you don't know any more than I; but then, you are not Michelle's uncle, and I am her aunt. Kings and Queens are queer things. I would that every King who reigns were as brave and charming as my own dear Charles the Second of blessed memory!"

It was a heavenly evening to Roger, and he remained after most of the company had gone. The night was cold, and the fire was meagre; and, warming himself at the small blaze, he saw a log lying inside the fender. Roger, softly and slyly, essayed to put the log on the fire, unseen by Lord Melfort, the comptroller of the household, who was standing near, but with his back turned.

But he was checked by the Princess Michelle's voice at his elbow.

"Put that down, Mr. Egremont," said she; "all this

"I Wish You to Come with Me"

day has the Queen gone without a fire herself that the gentlemen and ladies might have one in the saloon."

Roger put the log down at once.

"I wish I had the forests of Egremont to draw upon," he said, and then followed it up by saying in a quiet voice, but with rapture in his eyes, —

"Do you know, mademoiselle, that I am to have the honor of accompanying you and Madame de Beaumanoir, with the Duke of Berwick, to Orlamunde, — that is, if you will graciously permit me."

Michelle had been smiling at him across the fireplace, one of her little feet upon the fender and her fan shading her face from the glow of the embers. She wore a rich gown of puce-colored brocade, and the lace of the half-sleeve, falling back, revealed her delicate white arm. Roger saw the hand that held the fan tremble; she suddenly grew pale, and her arm dropped by her side.

"You — you —" she stammered; "Berwick, then, has selected you."

"Subject, of course, to the approval of yourself, mademoiselle, and Madame de Beaumanoir," replied Roger, promptly and stiffly. "It will not be necessary for you to make a formal objection, — a word, a look, and I would rather die than go with you to Orlamunde."

"I did not mean what you think," said Michelle, after a pause, and in her sweetest voice. "I wish you to go. Remember that the Duke of Berwick takes his orders on this journey, not from me but from the King of France — and so he had not spoken your name to me. But I shall esteem it a favor if you will go."

Roger's face assumed a discontented expression. He knew women well, did this young gentleman, and

The House of Egremont

thought when Michelle so freely expressed a wish for him to accompany her that she did not care a fig whether he went or not. So, although wild horses could scarcely have held him back from that coveted journey in her company, he said debonairly, —

“You are very good. I may yet be forced to change my mind. My corps marches straight to the Rhine. It may be that I ought to march with them.”

Michelle had great command over her expressive face, — all except her black eyes. They told their story to Roger Egremont in spite of her. They said, “Come with me on this journey, I want you,” and Roger, answering them both by look and word, said boldly, —

“After all, mademoiselle, I reckon upon being your escort,” and then a lovely smile dimpled all over Michelle’s face; but it was a sad smile, not a merry one.

Near by, was Madame de Beaumanoir, still talking with Berwick, who liked the old lady’s conversation, and was sometimes jovially accused by Roger of wishing to be the successor of the late duke and peer of France. She was saying, —

“So you go to Paris to-morrow, and so do I and my niece and that sober-sided François. I shall never make anything but a milksop out of him. We go by the river, in a boat engaged for the day, with carpets and cushions, and a collation to be served by my *maitre d’hôtel*. Come you with us.”

And seeing Roger talking with Michelle, the old lady screeched out an invitation to him too.

“’T will be most agreeable to us, — we shall need to go to Paris to prepare for our journey, — and I think, Mr. Egremont, we may accept the kind invitation of *Madame de Beaumanoir*,” Berwick replied.

"I Wish You to Come with Me"

To which Roger agreed joyfully, and when he walked back through the cold and dampness of a grim February night, felt as if he were in heaven. He had indeed preparations to make in Paris, and Berwick's hint of a good supply of money was most agreeable to him. And he had a duty to perform; he must, of course, go to see Bess Lukens and bid her farewell. This, be it observed, he regarded as a duty, and not strictly a pleasure. He always felt inexpressibly mean when in her company, he knew not why, and it would have been far easier for him to have kept only her memory. But being, with all his faults, of a loyal nature, he could not so ill requite her. In truth, Roger Egremont was better formed for love than friendship with women.

He was no laggard next morning, and he had been fully dressed for an hour when he met Berwick by appointment at the foot of the terrace below the hillside. They walked together briskly toward the river shining in the white light of morning. The fresh meadows were already green, although it was still February, and the air was full of that mysterious resurrection called springtime.

They reached the river, and at the water's edge lay a boat with rowers, and Madame de Beaumanoir's maitre d'hôtel and other servants, — the ladies were to remain some days in Paris, — and a huge basket containing the collation. And presently the old lady herself was seen coming down the valley, supported by François Delaunay's arm, and walking demurely behind her was Mademoiselle d'Orantia.

Michelle wore a crimson satin hood and a long furred mantle, for the morning air was sharp. Roger saw welcome in her eyes.

The ladies were assisted into the boat; the rowers

The House of Egremont

took their places; and they began to glide along the winding, steel-blue river. In the boat's stern, amid cushions and rugs, sat Madame de Beaumanoir. The old lady was in high spirits, and laughed and joked incessantly. Berwick listened gravely, and occasionally delighted Madame de Beaumanoir by his sage observations. Roger would have esteemed himself less than a man if he had not possessed wit enough to place himself close to Michelle. They sat with their backs to the rest of the party, hearing every word, and occasionally joining in the conversation; but, under cover of that incessant stream of chatter from Madame de Beaumanoir, they exchanged words not heard by any but themselves. They passed through the rich, flat valley of the Seine rapidly for their mode of travel; the rowers were many and strong and steady. The country people were at work in the fields, where the freshly turned earth filled the air with its odor,—the promise of fruitfulness to come. The hedges were showing faintly green amid their brown, and the trees, though still bare, were full of swelling buds. The sun shone dazzling bright, and bird-songs filled the air as the singers rioted in the trees and bushes; it was nest-building time.

Roger Egremont, who could never be anything but a countryman, a gentleman of the soil, revelled in all these sights and sounds; he relished them more than all the splendors of Versailles. He looked eagerly to see how they appealed to Michelle, and saw in her dreamy eyes and quiet observation that she, too, heard the sweet language which Nature, the mighty mother, speaks to her own true children. They talked a little; but their words and thoughts were in harmony with the scene before them. It seemed as if both of

"I Wish You to Come with Me"

them had tacitly agreed that time and circumstance were to stand still for them on that day, just as it had for the little time, that August evening, half a year before, when they had walked hand in hand as a shepherd and shepherdess through the woods and fields of St. Germain, — that day they had waked up to the fact that Corydon was Mr. Roger Egremont, a gentleman minus an estate, and living scantily upon the bounty of his exiled master; and Amaryllis was Mademoiselle, the Princess d'Orantia, a person accustomed to courts and likely to have her destiny fixed there. Because they knew this day together was but a dream, it was the sweeter.

"I am glad our journey to Orlamunde is to be in the springtime," said Michelle, softly. "It will be along country roads, unlike the paved highways I have been used to; for, I tell you, I have never been thirty miles from Paris in my life, and I only know the real country, — the deep forests, and stretches of plains, and the misty mountains, by what I have read of them in books, and the little patches of homely solitude I have seen near this place. I am convinced that Nature is affronted when Art seeks too close acquaintance with her. I do not believe the ancient silent trees like the company of fauns and nymphs, such as they have at Marly and Versailles and all these royal places. It frightens away the real fauns and nymphs."

"Do you believe in those divinities?" asked Roger, smiling. "I thought I was the only Christian pagan in the world."

"There you are wrong," gravely answered Michelle. "All who love the earth as it stands, believe in those divinities. What else mean those strange superstitions of the peasants? Why do they plant their grain on St.

The House of Egremont

Martin's day, and trim their vines on St. John's day? Only they give it a Christian significance. They never heard of the great god Pan. We — you and I and our like — hold on to these beautiful shadowy dryads and naiads, as we held on, when we were children, to gnomes and fairies. It is a joyous and sweet deception."

"I never thought of it in that manner. I grew up so unlettered that I never heard of the great god Pan, nor nymphs, nor dryads. It took another shape with me; I felt as if the solemn trees, and the still, silent fields, and the restless, talkative streams had souls and a meaning; that I could speak to them, and they could speak to me. I often fled far into the solitudes, even when I was a very little lad, to talk with the trees and streams. When I stood under any one of the ancient oaks at Egremont, — for I have fine oaks there, I promise you, — it told me a story of the winters and summers it had seen; that it had known my father when he was a curly headed urchin like myself, nay, that it had seen all those painted people in the hall at Egremont born, grow up, and die, and would see and know as much after I were dead as before I was born. I was ashamed to speak of these things to any one but to my cousin Dicky — Mr. Richard Egremont, now studying at Clermont to be a Jesuit. He lived at the edge of the park when he was a lad, and afterward in the house with me. I wish you knew my cousin Dicky; he is the merriest, honestest fellow — afraid of nothing."

"If he be so daring, why does he not become a soldier instead of a priest?" asked Michelle.

"Oh, a priest in our England needs to have as much or more courage than a soldier. 'Tis death to a Jesuit to be seen in England; but Dicky will go back, never

“I Wish You to Come with Me”

fear; the Egremonts have their failings, but they are not faint of heart.”

“He will go back with you to Egremont,” said Michelle, with a lovely smile. And Roger answered bravely,—

“Yes, mademoiselle, some day I shall go back, and shall be in better case than most of the gentlemen whose estates have been sequestered, for mine is in the hands of my bastard brother, as I told you that day in December on the terrace, and he is thrifty,—a bastard needs to be; and I shall find Egremont in good order and prosperous. Then shall I reap the fruits of my brother’s industry.”

As he stopped speaking, they heard a cackle of laughter behind them, and Madame de Beaumanoir was saying to Berwick:—

“Ah, you have something of your uncle Charles about you, and will yet have your fling—like him, the dear rascal! I would not give one such King as he for all your pious, praying, God-forgive-his-enemies Kings in the universe.”

And Berwick laughed at this, to Roger’s amazement, as always; for he never could understand how Berwick, a man without fear and without reproach, should either feel no shame at his origin, or should conceal it so stoically that no man, or woman either, saw the least glimmer of it. Michelle, too, was surprised at Berwick’s cool smile at this wicked pleasantry of the old Duchess, and exchanged a look full of meaning with Roger.

“And as for this journey to Orlamunde,” continued the old lady, “I should not fear in the least to make it with only my servants and François; for although François is nothing more than a lump of clay where good liquor and pretty women are concerned—”

The House of Egremont

Here François feebly smiled, and Berwick said, with a grin, "Madame, I am informed that Monsieur Delaunay is reckoned a most desperate rake, and that the King and Queen therefore desire him to be removed from their virtuous court."

"Ah," sighed Madame de Beaumanoir, "I wish it were true; there is not a man in my family fit to keep up the reputation of it. However, as I told you, I should not be afraid to make this journey alone, having neither youth nor beauty; but I like pleasant company. King Louis, you understand, is mightily obliged to us for going, although he has not seen fit to give me his reasons, and will not until we are fairly on the move for Orlamunde. He palavered much about this, did his Most Christian Majesty, the day I went with my niece to Marly. We saw the King in his cabinet, —old Maintenon, of course, listening with both ears; so I said to him that I hoped he would not send us so far without some good company with us; and when he mentioned you and Roger Egremont, I replied, 'There are not two pleasanter rogues at St. Germain: Berwick, for all his lantern jaws and solemn ways, has a spice of his blessed uncle in him.' You should have seen old Maintenon cast up her eyes to heaven; but the King knew; he was not always so prayerful as he is now—" and the old lady gave so unconscionable a wink that neither Berwick nor Roger could refrain from laughing.

At midday, they were half-way to Paris, and stopping for an hour to have dinner, and to stretch their cramped limbs on land, they left the boat. The maitre d'hôtel, and the two men-servants with him, laid the cloth upon the grass, under some cedar trees, for the sun was *strangely* warm for the season, and spreading rugs

"I Wish You to Come with Me"

and cushions on the ground, a sylvan dining-room was made. There was a good dinner and wine, and Roger, after he had done justice to both, rose, and, inviting Michelle by a look, she rose too.

"We will meet you at the bend in the river two miles ahead," he said, bowing low to Madame de Beaumanoir, as if it had been a preconceived arrangement with Michelle.

"Go on," she replied, flourishing the wing of a cold fowl at him, "but do not lose your way and find yourself at Verneuil instead of Paris. Young people used to lose their way in my day."

Roger was glad to note that day in Madame de Beaumanoir a kindness of heart he had not before credited her with. He saw her send some wine and dainty provender to the rowers, who were munching their black bread and cheese; and she gave them time to rest from their arduous toil. The boat was still moored, and the rowers resting, some sleeping, when Roger and Michelle started upon their walk along the river's brink. The path was very open; scarce a tree or a bush hid them from view along the turning of the bank. Once or twice, they stopped and loitered behind a friendly thicket, and had a delicious sense of being alone, and far from the every-day world. Roger's heart danced within his breast when he thought that, in the coming journey, he would have many walks like that with Michelle, only more solitary. He did not dream of making open love to her. Apart from the fact that he was, in plain language, a penniless adventurer, there was that hateful, ridiculous, odious, and senseless obstacle, — he was simply a private gentleman, and she a Princess, with some faint and shadowy tinsel of rank which placed her above any private gentleman in

The House of Egremont

Europe. Yet he did not believe that any man, no matter what his rank or title might be, had talked with her on such a footing of equality as he had done.

They walked along leisurely, in the bright sunshine, sometimes talking and sometimes silent; but in those eloquent pauses their eyes met and exchanged thoughts. Roger saw a change in her since that night they had met on the road toward Verneuil. Then she seemed at first sad and desolate of heart, and then wildly gay and excited. Now there was a quiet composure about her. It seemed to Roger Egremont as if this journey involved some resolution, — something which would change her life, and which she accepted with courage and patience, rather than gayety of heart. He thought it involved a long residence out of her own country, — she passionately loved it, as he knew; but that she was sustained by the hope of a return. That it would be long before she would see France again, he knew by what she said as they passed along by the shining river.

“I said a little while ago, in the boat, that I looked forward with sharpest pleasure to those days of travel that are before me. If only the road led into France instead of out of it! Sometimes — oftenest in the night-time — the thought strikes me that I am leaving my own country, and it is like a sword through my heart.”

“I know that grief,” said Roger; “but no one leaves his country without the hope of return —” and then it occurred to him that when he found himself once more at Egremont, Michelle might be very far away. He cast out this rude, interloping thought, however, saying, smiling, —

“When we are in our own land, our King restored

“I Wish You to Come with Me”

to his own, then must all those who have been kind to us in our exile, come to visit us in England. Then will we requite you; and you, mademoiselle, will be among the number; for I am sure Madame de Beaumanoir will land in England along with the King, if she can.”

At which they both laughed, and Michelle said, —

“I think I should like to see my mother’s country — and some day — some day I shall see it.”

And so, in sweet idle talk and sweeter silences, they went along, and, far too soon, they came to the bend in the river where they were to await the boat. It was already near, and then they stepped in it, and were borne steadily on toward Paris.

It grew dusk before they reached Paris. The solemn twilight, falling like magic over land and river and villages, the stars, coming out one by one in the dark blue heavens, as the opaline light died away in the west, subdued them all. It even stopped the clack of Madame de Beaumanoir’s tongue. There was no sound but the regular dip of the oars, the occasional faint cry of a night bird, or the echo of a dog’s friendly bark as they glided past the quiet villages, now dim in the evening shadows. The silver river turned to a purple blackness; a young moon was delicately and fleetingly reflected in the dark water. It was quite dark when they came upon the streets and quays of Paris. The towers of Notre Dame loomed large in the gloom of night. There were other boats passing them, or going along with them, — some bearing a crowd of roysterers; others returning empty to the villages whence in the morning they had brought supplies for the town; others still, loaded with merchandise, were making their way, slowly and mysteri-

The House of Egremont

ously along, bound for some distant place, far beyond St. Germain. The streets were still full of people, going from work, and the swinging lanterns, hanging on ropes at the crossings, cast weird and flickering shadows upon the water. They went quite into the heart of the town, landing at the quay on which the Louvre fronted. The vast, unlighted pile looked superhumanly large in the half-light. Berwick, friendly as ever to Roger, assisted Madame de Beaumanoir; while Roger Egremont, in the darkness, held Michelle's little hand in his while he helped her out, and for a moment after. A coach was in waiting for the ladies, into which they stepped, and rolled off, Madame de Beaumanoir commanding her two young friends to visit her as soon as she returned to St. Germain; they were both to go back the following day.

Roger remained standing in the street until the coach turned the next corner; he caught one more glimpse of Michelle's fair face and dark eyes before she was lost to his sight.

He sighed heavily. Berwick, without saying anything, clapped him on the shoulder, saying, —

“Come—to our inn—and note how different life will look to thee before a bright fire, with a good supper and honest wine to follow!”

Roger answered him with a dull, forced smile.

They went to a good inn, and had supper, and Roger Egremont, being a very human man after all, recovered his spirits immediately, and laughed and sang, and joined heartily in the toast to the ladies. But he did not mention Michelle's name, nor any subject of their talk during that long, sweet day. And Berwick, wise gentleman that he was, asked no questions.

Next morning early, they sallied forth, to make the

"I Wish You to Come with Me"

necessary purchases for their journey. Roger, in the rashness of youth, bought a suit of delicate green and gold, with a waistcoat of rose-colored satin; this was for the benefit of the ladies. And he also bought himself a brace of horse-pistols, and a furred body-coat and mantle of black cloth, and a little worn volume of Ronsard's verses, hiding the book in his breast and saying nothing of it.

In the afternoon he was to go to see Bess Lukens, and at five o'clock he was to meet Berwick at the Porte St. Martin. He wished it were already five o'clock, as he made his way on Merrylegs through the dark and narrow streets toward Papa Mazet's house. Roger Egremont was a bold man, full of daring; but some of your greatest poltroons where women are concerned are made of these swashbucklers.

As he turned the corner of the street, he came upon Papa Mazet, pottering along with his cane and snuff-box. Roger dismounted to greet him.

"Happy am I to see you, Monsieur Egremont," cried old Mazet, delighted, "and thank you for bringing that song-bird, Mees Lukens, to Madame Michot's. She sings all day, ever better and better. Next week, she is to sing at a little concert given for the King by Monseigneur the Dauphin, with the accompaniment of his Majesty's own band of twenty-four violins. But—" here old Mazet rubbed his nose dubiously, "she has her drawbacks — she has her drawbacks. When she is not singing, she is eternally sweeping, cleaning, brushing, scrubbing, and washing. Between us, I may say to you, my sister and I should be rather better pleased if she would let a few cobwebs and a little dust remain. We are cleaned and dusted until we are half dead sometimes. But Mees Bess has

The House of Egremont

a temper. My God! She has learned to swear in French, and it is truly terrible when she is angry."

Roger laughed at this.

"She was ever the most tireless worker imaginable. I go now to see her, and I have the honor to bid you farewell, monsieur. In a few days I go on a journey, and then to join the army of the Maréchal de Luxembourg."

Even as he spoke, the air was flooded with melody from Monsieur Mazet's house. Trills, like the full-throated song of birds, and roulades like the fall of fountains, echoed musically through the narrow old street, and the sun coming out strong just then, it was as if the darksome place were flooded with light and song. Bess was practising. Roger listened at the door until a pause came, and then knocked loudly.

Bess herself opened the door, and when her eyes lighted upon him, they danced with pleasure.

"Come in, Roger, — I thought you were never coming to see me again," she cried; and Roger, following her, entered and sat down in the long, low room, full of musical instruments, and with bare, polished floor, where Bess practised her singing. He did not need Monsieur Mazet to tell him of the change that had taken place. The floor shone with wax, and was so slippery that Roger thought his life in jeopardy when he crossed it. The chairs were rubbed bright; there was not a speck on window-pane or woodwork; and every piece of music was in exact order. Dusting and scrubbing were essentials of Bess Lukens's existence.

"I have good news of you — great news, Bess," said Roger, kindly.

"Yes," replied Bess, her face dimpling into smiles,

“I Wish You to Come with Me”

“singing is the easiest work in the world. Next week I am to sing before the King. Papa Mazet is scared out of his five wits; but I a’n’t. Somehow I never can be afraid of these here French. Now if it was before our own blessed King and Queen, there’d be something to be scared about.”

While Bess was speaking, Roger was studying her by comparison. Without doubt, she was one of the handsomest creatures he had ever seen. Hard work had not disfigured her, but had nobly developed her. The life she was now leading had refined her beauty. It was of that rich and luscious sort that appeals frankly to all, like a gorgeous full blown-rose. But Roger remembered a woman whose beauty was elusive, and of whom he could not say, as of Bess Lukens, that all the world could see all her beauty. Bess had a deep, deep dimple in either cheek, which showed beautifully when she laughed. Michelle had only a very faint one in her delicate, pale face, and when she laughed, it was more with her eyes than her mouth. However, Bess knew nothing of what was passing in Roger’s mind. She only saw him kind, interested, not ashamed of his friendship with her. She talked on gayly, —

“And you see how I have cleaned up,” she said, pointing around proudly; “and I look after the butcher and the green-grocer too; and you ought to hear me scold ’em! My voice always was pretty loud; but ’tis louder than ever now, and when I give ’em the rough side of my tongue, you’d think it was a Dutch trooper. I make the monsieurs shake in their shoes. On the the whole, I think no girl of my condition is as fortunate as me; for Papa and Mamma Mazet never speak a hard word to me; and I am doing what I like best

The House of Egremont

in the world,—to sing; and nobody but yourself and your cousin, Mr. Richard Egremont, know that I am Red Bess, the niece of Lukens, the turnkey; and I know neither one of you will ever betray me. By the way, would not Mr. Richard come to see me sometimes, if he be in Paris?"

"No doubt, with pleasure," replied Roger; "but Dicky, you know, is a seminarist yet, and does not often leave Clermont; although, he being English, and having relations and friends at St. Germain, they sometimes let him go there."

"I know," replied Bess, with something like a sniff, "I know he is to be a popish priest; and he, a good-looking young chap as might have his own way with the ladies."

Roger laughed.

"Come now, Roger," cried Bess, "you can't deny 't is a monstrous queer thing to do. I've seen some of them Jesuits in Newgate, and I never saw one that I did n't think had sense and learning enough to have kept out, if he had wanted to. But I like Mr. Dicky, for all his popery; and as I have no friends but French friends, except yourself, I'd like to have another English friend in Mr. Richard Egremont."

"I'll tell him all you say," said Roger, laughing; and then growing serious, he continued, —

"It would make me easier at heart if you had Dicky for a friend; because I go away shortly for a soldier, with my corps, and some of us will not come back."

The blood dropped suddenly out of Bess's rosy face; but she said quite steadily, —

"You go to England?"

"Alas, no! I go first upon a journey to the Rhine, and *then* join the army of the *Maréchal de Luxembourg*."

"I Wish You to Come with Me"

"And with whom go you upon this journey?"

"With the Duke of Berwick," replied Roger; and then, knowing she must soon find out all the particulars in a place where all the world gossiped, he added desperately, "We accompany the Duchess de Beaumanoir and her niece, Mademoiselle d'Orantia, to Orlamunde, in the Rhine land."

He forced himself to meet her eyes as he spoke, and saw in them fear and reproach. Yet she only said, —

"Mademoiselle d'Orantia was the lady you made hay with in the meadow?"

And Roger answered readily, —

"Yes, the Princess Michelle d'Orantia; she will make hay with a private gentleman for amusement, but she thinks him not her equal; so I go humbly in her suite to Orlamunde."

Bess's face did not clear. Her nimble wit told her that Roger meant to convey that Michelle was too highly placed for him to aspire to her hand; but that did not mean in the least that he might not love her desperately. Bess knew that it was quite possible to love beyond one's station. She said nothing; but the rippling stream of her talk and laughter were stopped. And Roger, to carry the war into the enemy's camp, said, —

"Perhaps, when I return, I shall find you married; that would not seem strange to the rest of the world, but it would seem strange to me."

Roger could not part from any pretty woman without infusing a dash of sentiment into the parting.

"La!" cried Bess, suddenly recovering herself, "I wouldn't marry a monsieur, unless he was to let me wash him all over, every day; for if he promised me

The House of Egremont

he'd do it, as like as not he'd lie about it. I like a clean man, and 'tis the great fault of these French folks that they a'n't in love with soap and water. You haven't told me to keep honest; well, that mark I gave you on your forehead speaks for itself."

"Truly it does, my dear. I never thought of telling you to keep honest."

"And you will let me hear from you sometimes?"

"I will without fail. Go you to St. Germain's, when occasion serves, and when you are a great singer, pay your respects to our King and Queen and little Prince."

"That I will. The King, I take it, is a mighty foolish old person. First, he ran away from England without cause, and has been trying to get back ever since. But he is my King and yours, and nobody is a better Jacobite than Bess Lukens, and I hate the Whigs worse and worse."

"Keep on hating them; 't is very wholesome."

Then, it was time for him to go, and rising, he said to her, —

"Good-bye, Bess. I pray you to remember me, and reckon me first among your friends."

Then, holding each other's hands, they parted solemnly and affectionately, Bess saying, —

"Roger, of all the people in the world, you are the best friend I have, and I love you honestly, as you love me; so good-bye, and God keep you."

She tiptoed and kissed his forehead near the scar she had given him, and Roger, lifting her shapely but coarse hand to his lips, kissed it as if it were the hand of a duchess; and that was their parting.

CHAPTER X

HO! FOR ORLAMUNDE

AT five o'clock, Roger found Berwick waiting for him at the Porte St. Martin, and then taking the road briskly, they arrived at St. Germain's before eight o'clock.

In the guard-room, they were told that the company of gentlemen-at-arms had got marching orders, and on the next morning would be reviewed by the King for the last time. All of these men had strange and mixed feelings. They were to descend outwardly from their estate of gentlemen, and become common soldiers, as far as their pay and duty were concerned. But they were to rank with the musketeers of the French King, of whom both rank and file were gentlemen; nor could any except a gentleman be of this picked corps, and the Duke of Berwick was to command them. These Jacobite gentlemen regarded themselves naturally as both heroes and martyrs, and being bold and adventurous spirits, the thought of the coming campaign, under the great *Maréchal de Luxembourg*, gave them rather relief as a blessed change from the tedium of St. Germain's, and the piteous sight of their royal master, whom they were unable to help. And so, with pain and joy, with hope and with sad retrospection they performed their last guard duty.

On the morrow, the commandant of the guard, General Buchan, paraded it under arms for the last

The House of Egremont

time as the household troops of James Stuart. It was a sombre February morning, the snow flying, and a bitter wind cutting the keen air. They were formed in the courtyard of the château, facing the main entrance. General Buchan was at their head. They remained motionless for a few minutes, — a soldierly body of men, each man an exile for conscience' sake.

Then, walking down the stairway, came the poor King, leaning on the arm of Berwick, and holding by the other hand the little Prince of Wales. Leaving the child to Berwick, the King came into the courtyard, and beginning with the commandant passed down the line, and wrote down in his pocket-book the name and rank of every one of them, thanking each man particularly for his loyalty. The last name the king wrote down was that of Roger Egremont, Gentleman, of Egremont in Devonshire. To Roger he said, —

“You have given up a noble heritage to follow your king, Mr. Egremont.”

“Sir,” replied Roger, “I durst not do otherwise, as I am a true man.”

The King then addressed them, speaking not without a certain majesty, — for James Stuart bore his sorrows manfully, without complaint or repining. He said, —

“Gentlemen, my own misfortunes are not so nigh my heart as yours. It grieves me beyond what I can express to see so many brave and worthy gentlemen who had once the prospect of being the chief officers in my army reduced to the stations of private soldiers. The sense of what all of you have done and undergone for your loyalty hath made so deep an impression on my heart that if it please God to restore me, it is impossible I can be forgetful of your services and sufferings. Neither



THEN, WALKING DOWN THE STAIRWAY, CAME THE POOR KING

— K —

Ho! For Orlamunde

can there be any posts in my armies but what you may have just pretensions to. As for my son, your Prince, he is of your own blood; and as his education will be from you it is not supposable he can ever forget your merits. At your own desire you are now going a long march, far distant from me. I have taken care to provide you with money, shoes and stockings, and other necessaries. Fear God and love one another. Write all your wants particularly to me, and depend upon it always to find in me your father and King.”¹

To this, General Buchan replied for the corps; speaking briefly and strongly, as men in their sad and desperate case should speak.

“For the sake of your Majesty we will submit to the meanest circumstances and undergo the greatest hardships and fatigues that reason can imagine or misfortune can inflict until God shall please to restore you and us to our own.”

The King at this took off his hat and bowed his gray head low to them. Then he turned and walked a few steps away, up the stairway, where stood the little Prince of Wales, silent and wondering, and clinging to Berwick. And having gone a little way, the King returned, still carrying his hat in his hand, and bowed low again to the corps — and then burst into a passion of tears.

At this the guard as one man kneeled and bent their eyes on the ground, and presently rising, passed the King, the tears streaming down his furrowed cheeks, and gave him all the royal honors.

When the parade was dismissed Roger Egremont went back to the palace. Outside, in the gardens, he met Berwick walking with the little Prince of Wales

¹ From Dundee's Memoirs.

The House of Egremont

and his governor. The lad, his hand within that of his half-brother, was pleading, —

“Ask the Queen, my mother, if you may take me into the forest to play.”

“Not to-day, my Prince,” replied Berwick, gently trying to loosen his hand.

Roger kneeled, and the little fellow was compelled to let go Berwick’s hand in order to receive upon his own hand Roger’s loyal kiss.

The child went off discontentedly, looking back at Berwick who was smiling at him, and Roger whose face was grave.

“When do we start for Orlamunde?” asked Roger, after a while.

“In a couple of days, perhaps, or possibly not for a week. I await word from Marly.”

Roger reflected; he could not go to Clermont to see Dicky, but he knew of a messenger going there, and Dicky might get permission from his superiors to come to St. Germain; there was little difficulty in the English seminarists going to and fro. So Roger hastened to his garret at Madame Michot’s and scratched a hasty line to Dicky; then finding his man in the village sent off the note, and began making his preparations to start at an hour’s notice.

He had not much to do; your man whose purse is light and his wardrobe scanty, can make ready in a little while to go to the ends of the earth. He looked around his great, bare room with the affection one feels for a place where one has been well treated. Yes, it was in that garret, on that narrow, hard bed, that he had dreamed his first dreams about Michelle. He had thought it a palace after Newgate gaol. He went down to the common room, which was quite deserted at that

Ho! For Orlamunde

hour, asked Madame Michot for his score, and paid it like a gentleman, without looking at it, saying, —

“I am leaving shortly for the campaign in the Low Countries, and wish to settle my affairs before the last hour before departure comes.”

Madame Michot expressed her regret at his going. Mr. Egremont had been so pleasant always, but so were all of the gentlemen who frequented her house.

“And madam,” said Roger, with an elaborate affectation of carelessness, “I hope you will continue to bestow your friendship on Miss Lukens.”

“I will; never fear,” replied Madame Michot; and Roger, floundering awkwardly, being at a loss for ideas as well as words, added, —

“If you would keep an eye upon her —”

Madame Michot’s mouth came open in a broad smile.

“It is hardly worth while for me to promise that, Mr. Egremont,” she said. “I know of no one better able to take care of herself than Miss Lukens; and if she takes it into her head to misbehave, I know of no one strong enough to stop her.”

At which Roger laughed and went his way. He reckoned Madame Michot as one of Bess Lukens’s most powerful friends.

On the third day Roger had an intimation that they would start on the following morning at sunrise. He had heard no word from Dicky, and feared he could not come to St. Germain. That day he spent strolling through the places grown dear to him in that past year. He walked through the forest. Spring was at hand, and the trees knew it. The brown earth was soft under his feet, and there was a faint blue haze over all the woods and fields and thickets. He had thought, when he first came to St. Germain, that he would not set forth from

The House of Egremont

it until he should take the highroad for Calais, and thence to England. He had no more forgotten his own land and Egremont than the Jewish captives had forgotten their country when they wept by the waters of Babylon. Every time he looked upon the fair face of Nature, or heard her voice, it spoke to him of his home. For so long it had been all he had to love! When the wind blew softly, it brought him recollections of the wind that wandered through the laurel copse and sported upon the wide, green lawn at the south corner of Egremont. When it rained he could shut his eyes and dream he was in the little tower room where he slept as a boy, and that the pattering drops were coming down upon the tiled roof of the buttery hatch below his window. Sunshine and starshine, night and day, morning and evening, in France, were transformed in his eyes to England, and this dream of his home seemed real, and the foreign country round about him unreal. And with every thought of Egremont came the fixed determination to make Hugo Stein pay dearly for every hour that he had kept the rightful master out of his own.

Thinking these and other poignant thoughts, he descended from the heights into the lovely valley of the Seine. He passed the lodge gates of the place where dwelt Michelle — he could not see the château for the trees. He walked to the place where he had first seen her, — the little retired strip of meadow, with the old rose-trees scattered about it. The spring had been farther advanced then, — it was not quite a year, — yet he had lived so much more in that time than in any other year of his life that it seemed a vast space of time. It occurred to him that he had already lived an eternity, *although* he was not six and twenty years old. Few

Ho! For Orlamunde

men had known such outward vicissitudes; none that he knew had experienced those inner changes. He had gone into Newgate prison one man—he had come out of it another man. He was by nature and birth a country gentleman—he was about to become a soldier of fortune. Yet, such was the true, adventurous nature of the man that he thrilled with joy at the thought of the chances and changes, the delights and the dangers of the life upon which he was to enter.

He could see the terrace from the valley, as he strolled along. The sun was shining, and coaches were driving slowly up and down, and people were leaning over the parapet. He did not go near them,—he was in no mood for people then. He climbed the vast stone stairs which lead from the meadow to the terrace, and sat on the stone benches by the way, and looking about him, asked himself, as all men do on leaving a place for a new life, “Shall ever I see this place again?”

He returned to the inn in the afternoon. On the way he passed Berwick on horseback, riding fast, with his servant behind him.

He stopped, leaned over in his saddle, and said in Roger's ear, “We ride to-morrow at sunrise.”

Roger literally ran back to the inn. There were a few of his modest preparations to be finished. He would not give up hope of seeing Dicky until the last, and so would not write him a last letter. At eight o'clock he dressed himself, *not* in his new suit of green and silver, and went to the palace. He had not the heart to flaunt his peach-colored waistcoat in the face of the King and Queen. He had heard the ladies say that the Queen had dressed quite shabbily of late,—although to him she ever appeared majestic in dress as in everything else; but he had no eyes for frayed brocades and mended

The House of Egremont

lace. The King always dressed plainly, and fine clothes were so rare at the palace that a new gala suit was sure to cause something like a panic.

He stopped for a half-hour in the Hall of Guards — for although there were no longer any guards, yet these gentlemen frequented their old quarters.

There were numbers of the late corps present, all eager for the coming campaign, and all bearing their melancholy fortune with cheerfulness and even gayety — especially the Irish gentlemen, whose spirits rose mightily at the prospect of fighting.

In the great saloon above, the King and Queen were, not sitting in state as the French princes and princesses did, but walking about, and motioning those to whom they talked to sit at ease. The King, beckoning to Roger, said to him, —

“Mr. Egremont, I was gratified to give your services, with those of the Duke of Berwick, to my brother the French King, for the temporary service he intends, before you join the Maréchal de Luxembourg. Yet in you I have lost the best penman I ever had.”

“I thank your Majesty for that word,” replied Roger, inwardly congratulating himself on having exchanged the pen for the sword.

And then the Queen called him to her, and told him smilingly that the little Prince of Wales had asked that Mr. Roger Egremont be made his governor, because he told such beautiful stories of bears and lions. Roger had sometimes amused the child with tales.

He was looking all the time for Michelle, with small hope of seeing her. But presently he heard Madame de Beaumanoir cackling in the distance, and in another minute she appeared, with Mademoiselle d'Orantia, and François in attendance.

Ho! For Orlamunde

Madame de Beaumanoir always made a flutter at her entrance, even into the presence of royalty. She chose a way of praising her ever adored King Charles before King James, which made that now strait-laced and deeply religious monarch writhe in his chair. It was — “One day, at the Duchess of Portsmouth’s — he! he! your Majesty, what gay days we had at Louisa K  roualle’s!” Or — “I never could abide that Mistress Eleanor Gwyn, with her orange-girl ways. Your Majesty never approved of Nell Gwyn, that I know;” at which King James, who had been no Puritan himself in those days, but who had repented, hummed and ha’d, and glanced uneasily around him, and fancied a lurking smile on every face. And so the King, after speaking to her, usually made haste to get out of her company. To-night he pleaded pressing business in his closet, and retired from the face of his tormentor. The Queen remained, and a certain Scotch gentleman, who played a good fiddle offered to play for the dancing of those present. A recruit was found in the person of another gentleman, who played the viol da gamba; so they had an impromptu little ball, the Queen looking on smilingly from her chair at the top of the room. There were jigs and reels and rigadoons, the Scotch and Irish gentlemen excelling in these merry dances. Roger, who was a fine dancer, fairly rivalled them and altogether distanced even the Scotch and Irish in the *minuet de la cour*. He had never seen Mademoiselle d’Orantia dance any of these informal dances, but to-night she did jig and reel, rigadon and strathspey with an incomparable merriment and grace. Roger had the anguish to see General Buchan take her hand for the minuet, and in consequence he retired and sulked in a corner.

It was known that Madame de Beaumanoir and

The House of Egremont

Michelle were leaving the next morning for Orlamunde, and that Berwick and Roger Egremont were to go Rhinewards with them. There was keen curiosity to know why the ladies should go to Orlamunde, but beyond the fact that they went at the request of the French King, no information was to be had. Mademoiselle d'Orantia simply declined to be pumped. Madame de Beaumanoir frankly admitted she knew nothing about it, except that all her expenses were paid, and she should not stay a day at Orlamunde longer than she pleased — if she had to risk a *lettre de cachet* by returning home.

All last things are sad; Roger could not but think Michelle's merriment put on, with her peach-colored satin gown, and pearl chain. At last, however, it was time to go home; the gentlemen fiddlers grew tired of fiddling. The King sent for Roger Egremont into the royal closet, where he found Berwick and the Queen.

"I have sent for you to say good-bye and God-speed to you, Mr. Egremont," he said. "The Duke of Berwick has my instructions. If I should never see you more, remember I am your King and father, and have ever found in you a good and dutiful subject and son."

And Roger, on his knee, kissed the hands of the King and Queen, and sent his duty to the Prince of Wales, and professed himself ready to die for the rights of his master, if dying could help them. The Queen too thanked him, bending upon him those glorious Italian eyes of hers, once so proud and laughing, and now so serene and full of sorrow majestically borne. Roger rose and backed out of the royal presence, leaving Berwick behind, who made him an unseen motion with his thumb, which was the magic signal for a night at the inn of Michot.

Roger left the palace, and walked fast through the

Ho! For Orlamunde

town, under the white moon and stars, toward the inn, — the last evening there too. As usual at that hour, there was great commotion in the common room; and as Roger entered the great door and passed Madame Michot, on her platform, a boyish figure ran forward and clasped him — it was Dicky.

“Ah, my lad, I thought you would not let me get away without seeing me,” cried Roger, delightedly.

“For sure, I would not, Roger,” replied Dicky, “but you know I can’t come and go like you gentlemen of the sword. I have to get permission from my superiors.”

“So do we,” said Roger, laughing, and drawing Dicky toward the punch bowl, which Ogilvie the Irish gentleman, was stirring something in, vigorously; “I know of monstrous few men who don’t have to ask some one’s consent for all they do. But now that you are here, Dicky boy, you shall make a night of it, and you can have from now until Christmas to do penance.”

The gentleman with the fiddle entered then, and then began one of the great joys of the Jacobites, the singing of songs to the confusion of their enemies. The weaker party must have its revenge, sure; and the revenge of the Jacobites was to make the finest songs ever sung, some of them full of wild longings for their country, and trolled forth with moist eyes, and choking of the throats of men; others, shouted out, proclaiming everlasting constancy to their King, and a willingness to do and die for him; others again, a roar of vengeance against traitors and ingrates, robbers and despoilers,—no epithet was vile enough for William of Orange, no scathing contempt bitter enough for the ungrateful daughters of the King,—and sung with a fervor that came from the souls of all who sang, and went to the souls of all who listened. At the choruses every man

The House of Egremont

joined in, whether he could sing musically or not; at least he could stand upon his legs, and shout out the sentiments which filled his heart. Poor souls; it was all the revenge they had, unless it was to see William of Orange having his own troubles with his English parliament; Mary, his wife, wretched and jealous, dying prematurely, and at enmity with all of the same blood as herself; poor foolish Anne, mourning the loss of her many children, and of her husband, and on her death-bed vainly crying out, begging that the justice she refused her brother should be done him. The Stuarts, too, were an unhappy race, but it is remarkable that they all knew how to make their exit, and had always some one to weep for them as they lay a-dying.

The evening was exactly like many those same men had spent in that same place, but it was the last. When, at the end, they all stood up and roared out their last song, it was to dub their company "the Devil's Own," — a name not wholly inappropriate; and then, in the midst of the carousing and shouting, it came over them that it was their last evening in that hospitable place; they grew suddenly quiet as they drank to the King, and afterward went soberly off.

Roger and Dicky went up to the garret, where a rude pallet was spread on the floor for Dicky.

They sat late, talking, looking out upon the river and the valley, until the moon, faint and pallid, sank out of sight, and the earth grew dark, while the heavens were bright with stars.

Roger told all of his affairs to Dicky, even of the journey all the way to Orlamunde, — all, that is, except the most important; and that was his deep and hopeless passion for Mademoiselle d'Orantia; but this, Dicky guessed for himself.

Ho ! For Orlamunde

"And, Roger, do you know it is quite possible that I may be ordained and go to England before you come back?" said Dicky. This meant that he might face imprisonment and death before they should meet again.

"I cannot gainsay thee, boy," said Roger, kindly; "you ever had an adventurous spirit,—'tis too much like my own for me to rebuke it, although you wear a gown and I a sword. And, Dicky, forget not poor Bess Lukens; though why should I call her poor? She hath now more pounds than we have shillings, I dare say, and seems singularly happy and content. She values our friendship, and I think she likes to say the Egremonts are her friends. She does not realize how little our service is worth, poor and exiled as we are. Pray, when you can get leave, go and see her.

"Indeed I will; I never saw an honest creature in all my life than that girl."

Dicky knew nothing of man's love for woman, except by observation, but he saw that Roger Egremont was not in the least in love with Red Bess. Then they lay down to rest; Roger's last conscious sight was of Dicky kneeling and praying very earnestly by the unshuttered window.

"Pray for me, Dicky," he said sleepily, and in another moment he was walking in the forest with Michelle, who put her hand in his and told him she was going to Orlamunde to marry him, and kissed him with great delight.

At daylight he was awakened by Dicky, fully dressed in his seminarist's gown.

"Get up, Roger. I am now going to have Merrylegs fed, and your breakfast will be waiting,—you have less than an hour to sunrise."

The sun was just tipping the tops of the half-bare

The House of Egremont

trees with golden light, when Roger and Dicky reached the edge of the forest, where they were to meet Berwick and Madame de Beaumanoir's party. They walked, Dicky with his black robe tucked up, and his light-blue, laughing, honest eyes shining under his berretta, Roger leading Merrylegs, on whom was strapped a small portmanteau, which contained all the worldly possessions of the head of the house of Egremont. This included the little bag of earth from Egremont, without which Roger had never slept a single night since that last night at his home, nearly four years before. They soon reached the appointed place of meeting, on the forest's edge, and Berwick, ever the most punctual of men, was on the spot as soon as they were. He rode a fine gray gelding, and his servant was riding another horse, and leading a packhorse, upon which he nimbly strapped Roger's little portmanteau. And in another minute there was a great rattling of wheels and trampling of hoofs heard on the road from the château, where it touched the highroad and Madame de Beaumanoir's equipage came in sight.

It was a cavalcade. First came the berline of the Duchess. She had fought hard to travel in her great gilt coach, but the impossibility of getting it through the passes of the Vosges daunted even her high spirit. The berline was horsed with only a pair, but behind the baggage wagon which followed, were led two other horses. The baggage wagon contained the maître d'hôtel, a footman who acted as coachman, and a couple of lady's-maids. Behind all rode François Delaunay, glad to escape from the berline and the company of his benefactors; and Mademoiselle d'Orantia rode beside him.

She wore a black riding-suit with a black hat, under which her dark eyes were lustrous. She rode with in-

Ho! For Orlamunde

comparable grace, and as her delicate figure was outlined against the bright sky of sunrise, Roger thought he had never seen her look so handsome. He remembered that she was not always handsome, but when she bloomed, as it were, she shone with a dazzling and brilliant beauty which was a charming surprise.

Madame de Beaumanoir, sitting in solitary state in the berline had a long cane with a jewelled head to it in her hand, with which she prodded the bewigged coachman and footman who sat upon the box. As soon as the party drew up she began to screech, —

“Here I am, my lads. This dull court was dull enough at best; but after you, Berwick, and Mr. Egremont and I go away, 't will be like a dissenters' meeting, — the sort my nephew François would frequent if I would let him.”

François bore this gibe with meekness, and Berwick engaging the old lady in conversation, Roger had a chance to speak with Michelle, who had drawn up her horse by the roadside.

“Do you contemplate making much of the journey a-horseback, mademoiselle?” asked Roger.

“All of it, Mr. Egremont,” replied Michelle, promptly. “You may remember, the second time we met, I told you that I longed to ride by night and day, and to know how it feels to sleep with the earth for a bed and the sky for a roof.”

When a woman recollects, a year after, what she said to a man the second time she met him, that man may count on her having a singular regard for him. And Roger Egremont, who was not unlearned in women, felt his pulses tingle when she spoke. He suspected it was an inadvertence, but it was not less delicious on that account.

The House of Egremont

Michelle spoke kindly to Dicky, who had seen her many times before, but whose youth and profession and lack of consequence had made him keep his distance.

"I wish you good fortune," she said smilingly. "I know not when I shall see France again, but I shall hope to see you then."

"I rather hope, madam," replied Dicky, blushing very much, "that we shall meet again in England."

Madame de Beaumanoir, catching sight of Dicky, called out, —

"So that's the young Egremont who is to be a Jesuit, and to go to England to be hanged for it."

"A man can die but once," answered Dicky, very readily, but blushing still more; "and if I am to be hanged, I feel sure an English hangman would do the job better, in less time, and in a manner more becoming a gentleman, than a hangman of any other country whatever."

"Why, boy," cried the old Duchess, "I did not dream your black berretta had so much wit under it; and you are comely too, like the Egremonts — too comely for a priest. Cast off that black robe, and be a cavalier, and marry some charming girl with a fortune."

To which Dicky had enough of the ineffable impudence of the Egremonts to reply, —

"Alas, madam, the lady who might win me from my vocation is far above me, being a Duchess, and, although still young, is older than I —" at which Madame de Beaumanoir screeched with delight, and Roger made a note in his pocket-book.

"Mem.: To write to Mr. Richard Egremont's superior at Clermont and say that Mr. Egremont shows signs of abandoning his profession."

Ho! For Orlamunde

"You should hear him fiddle, and hear him sing; no lark ever had a sweeter note," said Berwick. At this the old lady declared she must and should take Dicky by force to Orlamunde.

It was, however, time then to start. Dicky bowed low to the ladies, and François wrung Berwick's hand, and Dicky and Roger hugged each other like a couple of schoolboys. Roger sprung on Merrylegs, and Dicky disappeared into the forest. By running fast he could reach a point where the highroad was visible and he could see his more than brother once more.

There seemed nothing to delay the moving of the cavalcade, but yet no move was made. Madame de Beaumanoir explained the hitch in a manner very unlike her usual careless merriment. She said, quite grimly, —

"I must await the letter containing the precious secret of the King of France. A secret forsooth! As if all the kings of France could keep me from finding it out! Your politicians are ever as blind as bats. They never dream that any one can find out anything!"

Just then a great dust was seen on the highroad from Marly, and a gentleman on a briskly galloping horse rode up to them. It was Monsieur de Sennécý, one of the gentlemen in attendance on the French King. He dismounted, and taking from his pocket two letters, addressed and sealed by the French King, he handed one to Madame de Beaumanoir, and the other to the Princess Michelle. Madame de Beaumanoir received hers singularly for a person to receive a letter from the Grand Monarque. She turned the letter over slowly, her usually merry, keen old face quite grave, and looking full at Michelle broke the seal. There were only a few lines, which she read at a glance and

The House of Egremont

then, turning to Michelle and then to Berwick, said, meaningly, —

“As if I did not know it! Well — may no harm come of it.”

Michelle held her letter in her hand, and grew ashy pale, fingering it instead of opening it.

“You know the contents, mademoiselle?” said Monsieur de Sennécý, in a surprised voice. Michelle’s pallor and agitation could not be overlooked.

“Certainly, monsieur,” replied Michelle, with an effort; and then, with a supreme struggle, she regained her composure, opened the letter, which was a long one, read it through steadily, kissed the King’s signature at the end, and then looking up, fixed her eyes on Roger Egremont, although she spoke to Monsieur de Sennécý.

“Say to the King that all his commands shall be strictly fulfilled — and I am his dutiful subject.”

As Michelle’s eyes sought him, Roger Egremont had a strange sensation, and moreover, he was vexed and uncomfortable at being the only person in the party who was not in the secret. Berwick’s face was inscrutable; the French gentleman looked a little surprised at the way his communications had been received, and somewhat haughtily bowed as he remounted, wishing them a pleasant journey. The old Duchess screamed after him, “Tell your master that I am going to Orlamunde for my own pleasure, and I shall not stay a day longer than it pleases me, if I am put in the Bastille for it. I know he will never dare to deliver my message,” she added to her listeners; and then they set out upon their journey.

CHAPTER XI

THE JOURNEY, AND SOME CONFIDENCES MADE BY ROGER EGREMONT TO THE PRINCESS MICHELLE.

"A merry heart goes all the day,
Your sad one tires in a mile-a,"

trolled Roger Egremont in a voice, though not so good as Dicky's, yet highly agreeable. He was riding by the side of François at the time. Berwick had, without so much as saying, "By your leave," attached himself to Mademoiselle d'Orantia. The two rode in the lead, the travelling-chaise following, and Roger and François came next. The baggage wagon and servants were quite in the rear. To start out in the dewy freshness of a spring morning, on a good horse, upon an adventurous journey, with the lady of one's love in the party, is not a bad thing. So thought Roger Egremont, undisturbed by Berwick's possession of Michelle. He did not wish to make too free with his company. He had art enough and wit enough to know that it was well to make her ask herself the reason of his absence.

They had been travelling a good two hours before Roger broke out in song. At their first starting there had been something of uneasiness in the whole party. The receipt of the King's letters had not seemed to elevate either the Princess Michelle or Madame de Beaumanoir to the pitch of joy. Berwick had jogged along looking even soberer than usual. Even François's foolish face was clouded. Roger was annoyed at

The House of Egremont

being the only one in the party who was left out of some sort of information or arrangement, — he knew not exactly what, and had no vulgar curiosity to know, — but not to know made him feel like an interloper. However, the sweet spring day, the motion, the exercise, helped to put each one in tune, and when Roger trolled forth his song, waking the woodland echoes, every one wore a cheerful face, and had a composed spirit. There is no such soother of perturbed minds as a good horse, on which to traverse the King's highway, fair and free.

They made rapid progress, the roads being good, and skirting Paris without passing through it, found themselves at noonday on the side of the town opposite to St. Germain. They chose to stop in a pretty wooded place, rather than at an inn for dinner, Madame de Beaumanoir having brought a huge lot of provisions along. Her cook, however, — an incomparable artist, — had been left behind on a plea of illness; a plea which did not impress his mistress with its sincerity. She was therefore obliged to satisfy herself with the services of her maître d'hôtel and the footman. These two proceeded to lay a white table-cloth on the ground, and set forth a dinner that made the travellers' hearts rejoice; all except Madame de Beaumanoir, who bemoaned that when they had got to the end of their home supplies she should not again have a decent meal until she returned to her own château and the recalcitrant cook. She even threatened to send back for that functionary, but was dissuaded by the maître d'hôtel betraying that the cook had an engagement in Paris, and had sworn publicly that nothing would induce him to again serve a house where there was a lady at the head of it.

"The ungrateful villain!" cried Madame de Beaumanoir, and proceeded to baste the cook; winding up,

The Journey and some Confidences

however, with the observation that he was right, after all ; and if ever she adopted his profession, she too would decline to serve a mistress.

It was a very merry dinner ; Michelle laughed and talked more than Roger had ever heard her. The air was unusually mild, even for the spring, and they could almost feel the grass growing under their feet, and see the bursting buds. Their stop, however, was not long. Madame de Beaumanoir was determined to reach Meaux that night, although it made a day of hard travel. But the roads were good, the weather fine, the cattle fresh, and no one balked her. They again took the highway, Roger this time with Michelle. He thought she would be weary and would wish to rest in the travelling-chaise ; but he soon found that no old campaigner could sit a horse longer and with less fatigue than this delicately made girl. They talked gayly together, Michelle describing the country, of which she knew something so far. It was flat and rich and well tilled. Roger, as the case always was, found himself bringing into his talk something about the country at Egremont, until, after an hour or two, Michelle, breaking into laughter, said,

“Mr. Egremont, it is the seventh time, when I have said a spot, a stream was beautiful, land well cultivated, or anything in praise of this country through which you are travelling, that you have responded, ‘Madam, you should see such and such a one at Egremont!’”

“True,” replied Roger, quite sheepish and abashed. “I dare say I have made a fool of myself about Egremont ; I always do. But to tell you the truth from my heart, I cannot help it. I never could see the forest at St. Germain at evening without thinking, thinking, thinking about the woods of Egremont, how they looked with the evening light shining upon their dark masses.

The House of Egremont

And if a bird sang in a bush it recalled the singing of the thrushes and blackbirds in the hedges. Nor can I look at a rising moon, without seeing its reflection in the Dark Pool where the river widens out, under the myrtle bushes and alders—for myrtle does actually grow in the open at some spots in the path—and the oak avenue. If Hugo Stein has cut down all the oaks, as he often urged me to do—”

Roger unconsciously clenched his fist. His face was so expressive that Michelle could not but note it. Usually he was a comely man, with his wide, roguish, laughing mouth, white teeth, and glowing eyes; but when he was angry he became positively ugly. However, he checked himself in time, saying, —

“Pray pardon a man who has not yet learned to govern himself as he should. And now, think you that you can ride all the way to Meaux?”

“To be sure I can,” replied Michelle, with spirit. “I hope Monsieur Bossuet will be there; you know he is Bishop of Meaux, and perhaps we may have the good fortune to hear a sermon from him.”

“And perhaps,” piously added Roger, “being then well into the champagne country, we may get some of the best wine in France.”

They rode on steadily. At four o'clock they again stopped for a rest. They were then twelve miles from Meaux; but at Meaux Madame de Beaumanoir would sleep. At five they again started. Their last stage was made slowly, for the horses were tired, and the baggage wagon was far behind. The moon was high in the heavens before the roofs and steeples of Meaux, then a large city, came into sight. The town was quiet for the night; it was quite eight o'clock. The air had grown sharp, and Michelle had put on her travelling-

The Journey and some Confidences

mantle, and Roger found his furred cloak comfortable. They passed the huge mass of the cathedral, standing nobly and solemnly beautiful in the moonlight. Berwick piloted them to the chief inn of the town. The approach of such a party, and the incessant clacking of Madame de Beaumanoir's tongue waked the neighborhood. They had supper in a private room before a good fire, and as the case generally is with travellers' suppers, it was very gay. Then they parted for the night. Each one protested that he or she, as it might be, was perfectly fresh and ready to take the road at sunrise; but for the sake of the horses, they deferred their start until nine o'clock the next morning.

Berwick and Roger had a room between them with two beds; and it did not take them long to seek their rest.

At sunrise next morning Berwick was wakened by Roger moving softly about the room, dressing himself as quietly as possible. Ever since daylight they had heard at intervals the deep-toned music of the great cathedral bells. The chimes were exquisitely attuned, and their soft, deep, rich, melodious thunder was like a vast sea of aerial music, which rose and fell like the waves of some mighty ocean. The glorious sound would arise, filling the heavens and the earth with its majestic harmonies, swelling grandly and more grandly until it seemed to reach the great arch of the sky; and then to melt away, in the softest, the sweetest, the most delicate vibrations, only to rise, to swell, to die away once more.

Roger could not but stop sometimes in his rapid dressing to listen to this noble diapason; but he had great work on hand, and proceeded with it. He thought Berwick was asleep, until just as Roger with hat and cloak in hand, was leaving the room, Berwick rolled over in his bed and said quietly,—

The House of Egremont

"You go to the cathedral?"

"Yes," replied Roger.

"I am pretty sure you will find her there. She said as much at supper last night."

Roger went out laughing.

The inn was not far from the cathedral. The morning was fair and bright, and the sun lighted up the dark and narrow streets. When he came to the cathedral square the bells were still booming, booming thunderously. A great flight of birds, hovering around the gold-tipped pinnacles of the cathedral, shining in the glory of the morning, added their call to prayer and thankfulness, and acknowledgment of the good God, to the majestic command of the mighty bells.

"Come and give thanks," was the song of the bells. "Bring not into this sacred place any repinings against God, any ill-will against man. Behold here the places sacred to His saints, who bore the utmost malice of men, and yet praised God with great joy and much thanks. And leave outside all pride of rank and estate and all shame of humble condition; within these doors all are equal. Enter."

A hump-backed boy in a ragged smock was on one side of the great open door. On the other side sat a man in a tattered uniform of a private soldier, but Roger saw in his face and bearing some ineffaceable mark of the gentleman ill-treated of fortune. He remembered having often heard beggars cursed, but he did not remember to have read any of those curses in the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Roger gave liberally out of his slender purse to each of these poor suppliants, calling the boy "my lad," and the old soldier "my comrade." They thanked him more with their eyes than their tongues; and glancing up, Roger found Michelle

The Journey and some Confidences

close by, and bending upon him the soft splendor of her eyes. He blushed and smiled, like a boy. Without a word she joined him and they entered the great cathedral together.

Mass was beginning, and the low voice of the priest was broken by the delicious clamor of birds under the eaves. The bells having ceased their mighty music, the great golden voice of the organ in the organ-loft was lifted up and searched the arches and echoed from the vaulted roof. The interior of the cathedral was all purple and gold in the shimmering morning sunshine; the main altar glowed like fire, and the side altars and the statues of saints and martyrs were bathed in iridescent light, or else gleamed softly out of mellow shadows. The tombs with their effigies, — some of them of warriors of the Church and heroes of the State, others of women, royal or humble, their monuments telling the eternal story of love and death, — were illuminated with the rays of the morning; it was all inexpressibly lovely, solemn, and touching.

Roger Egremont knelt on the bare stone floor by Michelle's side. He prayed earnestly for his own forgiveness, and asked God to teach him how to forgive, — a lore in which he had but little learning. Presently, the organ, after giving its praise joyfully and majestically, became a murmur of music, like the echo of the wind among the trees, and then was stilled. The little bell tinkled, and there was the awful and solemn moment of the Sacrifice.

Roger Egremont bent his head to the ground and asked that God would be merciful to him, a sinner. And contemplating all His mercies, Roger became lost in love and adoration, and had one moment, one brief moment, in which he saw as far as man can see, into

The House of Egremont

then, turning to Michelle and then to Berwick, said, meaningly, —

“As if I did not know it! Well — may no harm come of it.”

Michelle held her letter in her hand, and grew ashy pale, fingering it instead of opening it.

“You know the contents, mademoiselle?” said Monsieur de Sennécý, in a surprised voice. Michelle’s pallor and agitation could not be overlooked.

“Certainly, monsieur,” replied Michelle, with an effort; and then, with a supreme struggle, she regained her composure, opened the letter, which was a long one, read it through steadily, kissed the King’s signature at the end, and then looking up, fixed her eyes on Roger Egremont, although she spoke to Monsieur de Sennécý.

“Say to the King that all his commands shall be strictly fulfilled — and I am his dutiful subject.”

As Michelle’s eyes sought him, Roger Egremont had a strange sensation, and moreover, he was vexed and uncomfortable at being the only person in the party who was not in the secret. Berwick’s face was inscrutable; the French gentleman looked a little surprised at the way his communications had been received, and somewhat haughtily bowed as he remounted, wishing them a pleasant journey. The old Duchess screamed after him, “Tell your master that I am going to Orlamunde for my own pleasure, and I shall not stay a day longer than it pleases me, if I am put in the Bastile for it. I know he will never dare to deliver my message,” she added to her listeners; and then they set out upon their journey.

CHAPTER XI

THE JOURNEY, AND SOME CONFIDENCES MADE BY ROGER EGREMONT TO THE PRINCESS MICHELLE.

“A merry heart goes all the day,
Your sad one tires in a mile-a,”

trolled Roger Egremont in a voice, though not so good as Dicky's, yet highly agreeable. He was riding by the side of François at the time. Berwick had, without so much as saying, “By your leave,” attached himself to Mademoiselle d'Orantia. The two rode in the lead, the travelling-chaise following, and Roger and François came next. The baggage wagon and servants were quite in the rear. To start out in the dewy freshness of a spring morning, on a good horse, upon an adventurous journey, with the lady of one's love in the party, is not a bad thing. So thought Roger Egremont, undisturbed by Berwick's possession of Michelle. He did not wish to make too free with his company. He had art enough and wit enough to know that it was well to make her ask herself the reason of his absence.

They had been travelling a good two hours before Roger broke out in song. At their first starting there had been something of uneasiness in the whole party. The receipt of the King's letters had not seemed to elevate either the Princess Michelle or Madame de Beaumanoir to the pitch of joy. Berwick had jogged along looking even soberer than usual. Even François's foolish face was clouded. Roger was annoyed at

The House of Egremont

manoir resumed her stories. Within half an hour she remarked, —

“I am not at all surprised to hear of the doings at play of the sons of Mr. Egremont of the Sandhills. Their father, I warrant you, was no saint, nor hero either. A more selfish, wrongheaded man — though I believe he was reckoned a man of honor — ”

“My leg!” exclaimed Roger, opening the chaise door without ceremony and jumping out while the chaise was going at a good speed.

When next he got in Madame de Beaumanoir very civilly inquired after his cramped leg.

“Much better, thank you, madam,” replied Roger, politely. “A few steps on the ground restores the circulation at once. But madam, I foresee that whenever you tell anything to the discredit of my family, it stops the circulation in my leg as if you had tied a bandage about it. So I implore you to desist if you desire my company.”

Madame de Beaumanoir was so pleased with his effrontery that she threatened to kiss him, which frightened him extremely.

The inn they made that night was but a poor one in a small village. When they looked at the dingy and uninviting room, Michelle said to Roger, —

“I thought, Mr. Egremont, that we were to sleep often at the Sign of the Shining Stars, as you called the out-of-doors once to me. Would that not be better than this wretched place?”

“No,” replied Roger; “but wait until we get to the mountain passes. We may have to do it then.”

“And I know I shall like it,” cried Michelle.

One wretched room was shared by Berwick and Roger. Berwick, wrapping himself in his cloak, said, “This is luxury for a campaigner.”

The Journey and some Confidences

Roger had meant to swear at the landlord next morning, but Berwick's words shamed him out of it.

The next day they penetrated deeper into the rich champagne country toward Épernay. The peasants were at work in the vineyards. They sang at their work. It was a cheerful sight to watch them in the balmy air, their harsh voices mellowed by distance. This day Roger again rode with Michelle, and found her kind. But it seemed to him as if every step they took from Paris she lost her gayety of heart. He had ever found in her a willingness to talk and think more soberly than was usual among her countrywomen. Now, however, although she often smiled, she did not laugh.

At Épernay, they fell in with a great party of people going to Paris in company. They were of the surrounding gentry, and comprised a number of those who held small places at court and had come on visits to their homes, generally in search of money. Hearing that Madame de Beaumanoir's party was at the principal inn they all came to visit her in the evening, and to propose they should spend the next day together. One of the gentlemen, the Chevalier de Montbois, invited them all to his château. Roger was pleased at this. He wished to know something of the real country life of France; he had only seen that strange medley at St. Germain, the intolerable round at Marly and Versailles, and a little of Paris.

He was charmed with his day at the château of Montbois, and comparing the life with that of the same class in England secretly thought the French the better. There was much mild wine drunk, but all remained sober. There was a light-hearted gayety among them that delighted him. They had dinner

The House of Egremont

served to a large company, within the château, and the sun being then very warm on the south terrace, they trooped out of doors to dance to the music of a pipe and tabor. The father of Monsieur de Montbois, an old gentleman of seventy, with snow-white hair; led off the dance with Michelle. She tripped gracefully, holding up her skirt, and her high-heeled red shoes leaving their pretty impress in the soft earth. Berwick danced with dignity, though rather stiffly, being used to parquet floors; Roger, however, who always appeared well when out-of-doors, was so agile and light of heel that the old Monsieur de Montbois fell in love with him and challenged him to a trial in dancing. Roger was artful enough to let the graybeard outdance him, and as he leaned, panting, against a tree, and pleaded more fatigue than he really felt, Michelle passing him whispered, —

“Do not dance again for some time — else your kindly ruse will be detected.” And then said out, aloud, in the next breath, —

“Mr. Egremont, I know, will dance with me now.”

“Pardon, mademoiselle,” exclaimed that arch-hypocrite, “but Monsieur de Montbois has so winded me that I must rest during this next dance. ’T is the first one I ever missed in my life because I could not do it — and to miss dancing with *you* mademoiselle!”

Monsieur de Montbois embraced and kissed him, crying out, —

“Oh, brave and gallant Englishman! How I love you!”

In the evening they returned to the inn, and to a good supper. Roger began to find this journey more agreeable than even he had expected — and he had expected much. He loved being out in the open all day, and the travel through a new country

The Journey and some Confidences

charmed him. He was in company with the woman whose society most pleased him of any on earth, and Berwick, the man he most esteemed and admired of any in the world, and they were both very, very kind to him. That day they travelled as far as Châlons-sur-Marne. It was but a short day's travel, and they reached the banks of the Marne by four o'clock in the afternoon. Michelle still disdained the chaise, and professed her determination to ride a-horseback all the way to Orlamunde. François Delaunay, on the contrary, grew stiff with so much riding, and had to take to the chaise, much to the disgust of Madame de Beaumanoir, who considered it as another proof that he was a milksop. The poor young man, exposed to the gibes of his benefactress in the chaise, and suffering from an ill-gaited horse when he chose another mode of travel, was an object of much diversion to the rest of the party.

"It is well to harden one's self, mademoiselle," remarked Roger, when Michelle's endurance was praised at François's expense. "The day may come when you will long to see your own land and ourselves, your own friends, before the time appointed for you to return; and then—presto! all you have to do is to mount your horse, turn his nose toward France, and ride as you are now riding—and you will be there."

Michelle, in reply, turned on him two eyes, so filled with a sudden fear and melancholy that Roger was amazed and abashed.

"It might very well be," she said. "I might desire to make my way back to France, but I should be pursued and brought ignominiously back. No! I hope I shall ever have sense enough to appear to submit voluntarily to what I cannot help."

The House of Egremont

Roger was still more puzzled at her words. She and Madame de Beaumanoir were going to visit their relative, the Prince of Orlamunde. No time was fixed for their return, but no one had power to detain them a day longer than they wished. But then he remembered uncomfortably that there was something in this visit which he did not wholly understand, and so he relapsed into a sulky silence.

The sun was shining on the broad, bright Marne when they reached it. They had had no bad weather so far. A boat was got for them, and it took three trips to transport the passengers, with the chaise and baggage wagon. The saddle-horses swam the stream. When they reached the opposite bank, Michelle's horse being too wet for her to mount, Roger offered his escort to walk with her to the inn of the Golden Lion, where they were to stop.

They walked, therefore, from the river bank to the inn, a considerable distance, through tortuous streets. It was not the same as walking in the pleasant country lanes. The sights and sounds and smells were not inviting; but Roger admired Michelle's calm and unruffled air at things that would have provoked spleen in most women.

Madame de Beaumanoir, who was not, after all, so young as she had been when she was a reigning toast at the court of Charles the Second, retired with her woman as soon as supper was over. Michelle being obliged to go also, Berwick and Roger spent their evening together, as they had usually done since the beginning of the journey. François did not give them much of his company, being usually engaged in writing down in his commonplace book all his acts and reflections for the day. To-night he sighed heavily, as, at the table in

The Journey and some Confidences

a corner of the common room, he wrote, and then desisted, and then wrote again.

"What is the trouble, Delaunay?" asked Berwick, flourishing a decanter of wine in François' direction. "Come and be jolly with a couple of sinners."

"I would I were such a sinner as you two," sighed François. "You are gentlemen and men of honor, and have no scruples in the life you lead. While I, gentlemen, I am the most tormented man on earth by that —"

François stopped; he too was a man of honor, and received much kindness along with many cruel gibes daily from Madame de Beaumanoir. And Berwick and Roger grinned heartlessly at him and urged him to drown his sorrows in drink, and find surcease of pain in play. François shook his head at these wicked suggestions and went dejectedly to bed.

There is a very noble cathedral at Châlons, and Roger, putting two and two together, determined to visit it early the next morning. He thought he could get quietly out of the inn, without being caught by Berwick; but that sharp-eyed soldier called to him from an upper window as he passed through the courtyard, —

"Turn to the left for the cathedral. She has had above ten minutes' start of you."

The morning was dark, — the first unpromising day since they had left St. Germain. Roger walked through a hideous black rain to the cathedral, which loomed dark and mysterious through the veil of rain. A handful of worshippers revealed the vastness of the interior. Roger had no difficulty in distinguishing Michelle in the dusk of the great nave. She had on a long black cloak which enveloped her, and which she drew around her throat, so that it almost concealed her dainty face

The House of Egremont

in its black hood. He thought she was weeping. The sound of the rain descending on the vaulted roof was like thunder, and there was not a ray of light except two sparks of candles on the high altar, and the faint glow of the sanctuary lamp. Roger Egremont said his prayers that morning as most human beings do; that is, he implored happiness from the Giver of all good, as children cry out for their favorite toy, and thought, because he was very earnest about it, that he was very devout. Then he asked forgiveness for his sins and offered forgiveness to his enemies in rather a lukewarm manner, but thought himself extremely pious to do so at all. He had no sweet unction of the soul as at Meaux; but at last some glimmer of light revealed to him his miserable imperfections, the multitude and vigor of his bad impulses; and, as it always follows, the sense of his own unworthiness raised his belief that there was One infinitely good, who desired him to be good also. He looked at Michelle and wondered what sins she had upon her conscience, thinking foolishly, as most men do, that a person removed from the temptations of war, women and liquor, must find it easy to be good. When the service was over Roger was still kneeling, and thinking so profoundly of her that she thought he was praying as she passed him. But some instinct always revealed to Roger when she was near. He detected that light step among many others upon the stone floor. He rose quickly and joined her.

As they walked through the muddy street together Roger suddenly asked her what prayer was.

"I can tell you very readily what it is *not*," replied Michelle. "To weary Heaven with our supplications for happiness is not prayer. No such prayers were made in the garden of Gethsemane, nor upon Calvary."

The Journey and some Confidences

Roger was abashed.

"I see," he said sorrowfully, "that I do not yet know what it is to pray."

"What are your prayers?" asked Michelle, very gently, but half laughing. Roger, assisting her over puddles and trying to shield her from the rain with his broad hat, replied, —

"I think my first prayers were that I might succeed in catching my game; for, as you know, my youth was spent in caring for some of God's dumb creatures far beyond their worth, — such as horses and dogs, — and mercilessly destroying others, like fishes and foxes. Then, when I grew older, I prayed that the reign of King James might succeed, — you see, mademoiselle, I had a great stake in it, being a staunch supporter of the King, — and then I demanded, rather than asked, that God should continue me in health and prosperity. After I was in Newgate gaol, I did not pray at all for a while, thinking that the Most High had treated me shabbily in suffering me to come to such a pass in defence of my King and country against the foreigner."

Roger told this with such an air of naïveté that Michelle smiled quite openly.

"When I again prayed, it was that God would punish my enemies, especially Hugo Stein, who calls himself Hugo Egremont. I can truly say that when it came to praying for revenge upon him, I wrestled in prayer as did Jacob with the angel. Presently I saw the folly of this, and concluded to leave Hugo Stein's punishment in God's hands — as I could not take it out, observe — and meanwhile to do all that lay in my small powers to compass Hugo's destruction. That is what men call, I believe, submitting to God's will."

Michelle was almost laughing now as she glanced up,

The House of Egremont

her fair face looking quite roguish under her black hood, her eyes dancing as they met Roger's, which were comically serious.

The dark rain was still pouring, and it dripped upon his bare brown head, with his long curls on his shoulders, and shone upon his sun-browned, vivid face, as he held his hat to protect her from the rain. He kept on gravely, —

“When I came to St. Germain's I began to see — well, as you have said, what prayer was *not*. I could not give thanks for the loss of my estate, as the King does daily for the loss of his three kingdoms. His Majesty thinks he led a wicked life in his youth, especially in breaking his vows of fidelity to his wife, — a most heinous sin, I take it,” Roger added boldly, desiring the approval of the lady in whose sweet company he was at that moment; “but I reckon myself to have led a clean and gentlemanly life when I was in the enjoyment of Egremont. Most of my sins came from the losing of it; so I have no reason to give thanks for *that* loss. But of late when I go into a church or a chapel, and kneel down to pray, I think less of my grievances, and more of the perfections of the good God. My injuries seem but small to what Christ endured. I am far, very far off from praying well, but I do not pray so ill as I once did — and oh, mademoiselle, what a fool you must think me for telling you all this!”

“Not at all,” answered Michelle, in a soft, low voice. They were then passing through a public square, under trees which shielded them a little from the rain, and they seemed alone and far from the rest of the world. “All human beings, I know, go along the road you have described — women, more than men; for we lead such

The Journey and some Confidences

interior lives, we dwell so much with our thoughts and our feelings and our prayers, that they are more to us than the same things are to men. All I ask for now is that, knowing my duty, I may do it, that no human being may ever be wronged by me, no matter how great my malice against him may be, and that I may have the privilege to suffer in place of those whom I love."

"And whom do you love as much as that, mademoiselle?" suddenly asked Roger.

Michelle looked at him with startled eyes. She stopped still in the path. Roger, his eyes fixed on her, read her like an open book. Whom, indeed, did she love? She had neither father nor mother, brother nor sister. The tie was strong between Madame de Beaumanoir and herself despite their unlikeness — there had been kindness on the one side, gratitude on the other; but not the affection which asks to be sacrificed for the beloved object. There was François, a good fellow, and she had friends, but —

"I perceive," she said presently, "that I have deceived myself. I am poorer than I thought."

"You mean, mademoiselle," said Roger, deferentially, "that some day you hope to love so deeply and truly that you can in truth make that prayer to suffer."

"No," replied Michelle, quietly, and walking on, "I neither hope nor expect that. My prayer was foolish and insincere, — far more foolish and insincere than any prayer you ever made in your life."

They walked on without uttering a word more. The morning, dark and dismal before, seemed to have grown a thousand times worse to Roger Egremont. Châlons he thought the dirtiest town in the world; he wondered the King did not make the citizens keep it

The House of Egremont

cleaner. A man was a fool to let the love of a woman lodge in his heart, — to be made wretched one moment by a chance word and joyful the next, for nothing at all. Thus, discontented and unhappy, he reached the inn. Michelle disappeared to change her wet clothes. François, meeting him in the courtyard, said that Madame de Beaumanoir would not start until the weather cleared.

"I cannot stand this infernal inn this whole day," cried Roger, — it was a remarkably good inn, — "I shall ride ahead as far as Vitry; I may go on to Bar-sur-Aube. I shall order my horse. Make my apologies to the ladies, and say I will rejoin them on the road."

He called to the ostler to fetch Merrylegs from the stables, and then went in search of breakfast and Berwick. He got his breakfast, and then, Berwick strolling into the common room, Roger told him of his intention to ride ahead.

"You will have enough of this in the campaign," coolly remarked Berwick; "for my part, I shall keep my cloak dry whenever I can. If you go on to Bar, leave word at the Three Roses in Vitry."

Roger set forth. The rain still poured, but he felt it not. He was in motion and out of doors; that always made his misfortunes seem lighter. He rode ahead steadily, and Merrylegs, who had proved himself worthy of his name, showed no lack of energy in taking the road before him. Every mile Roger put between himself and Châlons, he was less heavy-hearted. Lovers' pangs are sharp, but singularly curable as long as the lady remains unmarried. At last, just as he saw the old castle rising on the hill at Vitry, the sun came out gloriously. He thought he would not go on to Bar.

The Journey and some Confidences

He turned around and had half a mind to ride back toward Chalons, but mercy for his good Merrylegs restrained him.

He rode into the little town, put up his horse at the Three Roses, and then went for a walk around the old castle. It was the loveliest of all the lovely days they had yet had upon their journey. The face of nature was newly washed, the trees were putting on their new green liveries for the festal time of spring. The sun shone out with a generous and penetrating ardor that warmed the whole earth and all the people on it. The gray old castle basked in the noonday light. Roger Egremont wandered over it and, standing on the ancient parapet under the deep blue sky, saw all the beauty around him — and could enjoy none of it, because Michelle was not there.

CHAPTER XII

"YOU HAVE BROUGHT ME TO THE GATE OF PARADISE
AND HAVE SHOWN ME THE GLORY OF THE
BEAUTY WITHIN — AND THEN HAVE THRUST ME
AWAY!"

THE party did not leave Châlons until the sun had come out, which was after midday. Berwick, as usual, rode with Michelle. She trusted and admired him as all discerning women did, and often asked herself if the little Prince of Wales would ever be half the man his tall, taciturn, half-brother was. And Berwick, knowing, as Roger did not, what was before her, felt for her a profound pity and esteem.

"We shall have but a short day's journey," she said, when the spires of Châlons had melted from their view and they were riding, a little in advance of the chaise, on a good highroad.

"But," she added, "I think I do not care how short the day's journey is, for it makes the time longer that I shall be in France. I never knew how much I loved my country until I made ready to leave it."

"'Tis the best country in the world to strangers," cried Berwick, gallantly, "but, mademoiselle, no country is like one's own. The bread which is given to exiles, albeit the kindest and readiest hand in the world that gives it, has ever a bitter taste. The clothes *that* are bought with another's money never have any

To the Gate of Paradise

warmth in them. If it were not for hope all of us at St. Germain's would have died long ago."

"You at St. Germain's have not so tiresome a time as the gentlemen and ladies at Marly," said Michelle, smiling. "At least you have the unchanging favor of your King. At Marly every one wants something and works — how they work! — for it. In winter's cold and summer's heat, in illness, in weariness of body and spirit, yet they work, work, work! You are not so worn out at St. Germain's."

"True," said Berwick, with his grave smile. "The French court calls for ten times the patience and assiduity we ever needed at St. James's. And some of us — the younger ones — take things joyously at St. Germain's, for we all hope to be restored to our own. Even our friend Egremont plumes himself that his estate will be worth more when he gets it back into his hand than when it was torn from him."

As Berwick spoke Roger's name, a blush kindled all over the creamy cheeks of Michelle. Berwick was sorry for her at that moment. She shook her bridle-reins and quickened her horse's pace, and no more was said of Roger.

It was late in the sunny afternoon before they reached Vitry. When they clattered up to the entrance of the courtyard of the Three Roses, Roger was waiting for them. As soon as Michelle drew rein, Roger stepped forward, and without regarding the rights of Berwick, who had the privilege, as the gentleman riding with her, of lifting the Princess Michelle from her horse, swung her to the ground. And again Michelle blushed.

Madame de Beaumanoir and François were close behind. The landlord, bowing to the ground, was at hand, and supper was ordered at once.

The House of Egremont

There is something in change and movement which makes almost any inn tolerable for a night, and the life they were leading was novel to all of them except Berwick. Their supper, in Madame de Beaumanoir's room, served by the landlord himself, with the maître d'hôtel to stand between him and the old Duchess, was gay as usual. When it was over, the young moon was high in the sky of night, which was still ineffably blue and clear.

Roger began to urge Madame de Beaumanoir to walk out and see the old castle by moonlight. Madame de Beaumanoir pleaded fatigue, rheumatism, old age. Roger answered these objections by producing from somewhere about the inn, an ancient and moth-eaten sedan chair, in which the old lady, with screams of laughter, ensconced herself.

"And you, mademoiselle, will go too?" he asked of Michelle.

"With pleasure," she replied.

Roger looked at Berwick, who shook his head, as much as to say, "Manage this campaign by yourself. my fine fellow!"

François had bought a volume of sermons at Châlons, which he had carefully concealed from Madame de Beaumanoir, and was dying to read, so he relieved them of his company; and Madame de Beaumanoir, with two chairmen carrying her, set forth, Roger and Michelle walking by the window of the chair, and pointing out the beauties of the little town, lying still and quiet in the moonlight, which cast its mysterious charm over all the scene. When they reached the point where the castle rose before them, its silvered battlements shining in the light of moon and stars, they rested under a tree in a little open place surrounded by gardens. Madame de

To the Gate of Paradise

Beaumanoir, as soon as her chair was set down, put her head out of the window, and entered into a discourse, lasting half an hour or more, concerning a certain moonlight water party at Hampton Court in which the blessed King Charles figured in the usual manner. When she had finally reached the end of her tale, she looked about her. Both of the chairmen were asleep, and Roger and Michelle were nowhere in sight. Madame de Beaumanoir scolded her chairmen until they were broad-awake, but there was no finding the deserters. Those two renegades had walked off, Michelle scarce knowing what she did, except that the moonlight was sweet, and that Roger's voice was very seductive when he said, —

“There is a very noble tower which can be seen if you will but come a few yards away.”

The few yards away was a considerable distance; and when they found themselves alone, under a hedge, with the gray mass of the old castle looming up before them in dreamlike beauty, the two poor souls forgot everything but each other. They spoke little, but under all Roger said lurked something that told of the passion within him. She was Mademoiselle the Princess d'Orantia, and he was simply Mr. Egremont, a gentleman who had not so much as a pair of boots, except what he might win with his sword. Obviously love should never so much as be thought of between them; but—perversity governs the world. And this vast inequality between them disappeared when they stood alone together in the moonlight, Michelle's eyes, the only feature she knew not how to control, looking at poor Roger with a world of meaning in their soft depths. Her eyes were dark and deep and changing, like the Dark Pool at Egremont, in which were mir-

The House of Egremont

rored night and day, clouds and sunshine, darkness and light; it was never the same for an hour together.

And sweet moments like these must be many before they reached Orlamunde; and after that — well, a campaign was coming; a soldier with his sword could cut his way through a forest of obstacles. So thought Roger.

They were roused from their dream in Paradise by Madame de Beaumanoir's voice in the distance, cutting the air like a knife. They ran back, like a couple of school children caught playing truant, — the bold Roger Egremont as meek and apologetic as François Delaunay could have been.

"A pretty cavalier you are!" bawled the old lady to Roger on one side of her chair, "leaving me in the lurch like this. I warrant your father, for all his faults, poor man, and he had a plenty, would never have been so rude. Nor would those worthless Sandhills Egremonts have so used me. Let me tell you, young man, you have a great deal to learn yet, nor do I see any great aptitude in you!"

Roger bore this assault on himself and his family with exemplary and silent patience. It was then Michelle's turn.

"And you, miss, call you this proper to go off for a couple of hours," — it had been a scant half hour — "with a gentleman in this manner? What if at Orlamunde —"

"Madam, madam," implored Roger, "I alone am to blame; this young lady is perfectly innocent."

"I know it," snapped Madame de Beaumanoir. "Everybody is always perfectly innocent in cases like this."

"If I were Monsieur François Delaunay," continued

To the Gate of Paradise

Roger, recovering his spirits slightly, "would you so belabor me for being a little too gallant to a charming young lady, like *Mademoiselle d'Orantia*?"

"Oh, François, he is a sheep of a man, if you please; he has no red blood in him."

Roger managed, however, to keep Madame de Beaumanoir's denunciations directed toward himself, and they returned to the inn, the old lady rating him soundly the whole way. When they arrived at the door, Berwick and François were awaiting them.

Michelle escaped to her room, while Madame de Beaumanoir, standing under the swinging lantern in the doorway, gave Roger a new and complete scolding in French, as she had done in English, the chairmen and porters standing around and grinning, Berwick urging her on, and supplying fuel for the fire of her wrath, François mutely sympathetic, and Roger, hat in hand, in speechless humility. When at last she retired, leaving Roger to the tender mercies of Berwick, he registered a vow before high Heaven that never would he give cause for offence to Madame de Beaumanoir again, if he should live to be a thousand years old.

The next day they made Bars-sur-Aube, and in a day or two more they were climbing the rough sides of the mountains of the Vosges.

In the pleasant champagne country it had been spring, with a glint of summer, but in the Vosges they returned to winter. The air was sharp and cold, the inns were far apart and comfortless. The streams, swollen by the melting snow and the spring rains, had in many cases washed the bridges away. The travelers were delayed at many rivers, and sometimes passed days in wretched houses of entertainment, and once

The House of Egremont

even in a charcoal-burner's hut. They were two weeks in crossing the mountain ranges.

But they were two happy weeks to Egremont and Michelle, in spite of rain and wind and cold and privations.

Roger's little volume of Ronsard's poems was a delight to him. He wished the chance to read those passionate, sweet poems to Michelle, and cunningly contrived it, by taking the volume out of his breast when he knew Michelle was observing him, and reading it as he jogged along on Merrylegs. Of course, a woman must know what a man is reading whenever she sees a book in his hand. Roger always replaced his dear Ronsard with an ostentatious show of secrecy, in his breast, as soon as he saw Michelle's attention openly fixed on him. It was not long before she asked him what book was that he read so often and seemed so anxious to conceal.

"A book, madam, in which you would take no interest. Yet will I show it to you if you really wish to see it."

This was most vexatious. She really wished to see it, but she really did not wish to acknowledge this. But Roger deliberately putting the book back into his breast, Michelle could not forbear asking to see it. She assumed a careless tone, but that did not deceive Roger. At once her eyes sparkled.

"Dear Ronsard!" she cried; "I ever loved him!" and then she began to read some of his verses, and stopped with a conscious blush.

"Let me read you something that I love," said Roger; and turning the leaves at random, he found a stanza full of sentiment, which he read so meaningly that the color deepened in Michelle's usually pale cheeks.

To the Gate of Paradise

After that, Roger took a mean advantage of her admission that she loved Ronsard, and often, when they were riding alone together, would he read to her from that poet of the heart—and read so well that it was plain Pierre Ronsard was speaking for Roger Egremont. The volume was a kind of talisman. With it Roger could at will bring the blood surging into Michelle's fair face, make her glance sidewise at him with a tell-tale light in her eyes, and render her blind and deaf to all except the poet's magical words.

The very happiest time of all was three days of storm they spent in the charcoal-burner's hut. It was new to them both to see a storm-swept mountain forest, the wind roaring along the rocky gorges, bearing down the sturdy pines and larches in its madness, and wrapping sky and mountains in a shroud of black rain and mist. Roger and Michelle watched it together from the one unglazed window of the hut, and were lost in admiration at the beauty and fury of the tempest. They were safe in the little secluded place where the charcoal-burner had built his rude shelter. The ladies slept in the hut, the gentlemen lodged in the chaise. The servants slept in a hut still poorer and ruder, a short distance off. There was food and a plenty of good wine, thanks to the maître d'hôtel, and the gentlefolks rather liked their strange experience. The servants grumbled much. On the third night, when the dun clouds that almost rested on the tree-tops had drifted sullenly southward, and the angry wind had been soothed, the full moon came out gloriously. Roger was not indiscreet enough to propose to Michelle a prospect of the scene by moonlight; his recollection of the moonlight at Vitry was too recent and too poignant. But going out of the hut, where by

The House of Egremont

the light of a single candle Madame de Beaumanoir with Berwick and François played primero, he cast a sly and meaning glance back at Michelle.

When he had been gone five minutes and the old duchess was deep in her game, Michelle rose, and wrapping her cloak in which she had sat more closely about her, opened the door silently and slipped out. Leaning against the door-post was Roger Egremont.

"Look, mademoiselle," he said; "the trees are so still—so still, and so white on their tops, and so black under their branches; and listen—you can hear the singing of a dozen waterfalls."

Michelle listened, and the voices of the falling waters made the night musical.

"You will see many nights like this," she said, "but I shall not. Remember me sometimes when you are in a lonely mountain place like this, and something recalls this spot."

"Remember you!" replied Roger, in a low voice, and said no more; but he looked at her hard in the bright moonlight and saw what he wished to see in her melting eyes. He took her little warm hand in his; he needed not to speak, and the hand he held fluttered, but made no effort to escape.

"And will you think of me sometimes at Orlamunde?" he asked.

"Yes," she said, in a strange voice, "I shall; you may depend upon it."

"And when you hear that I have got a step in promotion, or better still, that we are restored to our own in our own country, then look to hear shortly from Roger Egremont, for not a moment will I lose in writing you first and seeking you afterward."

Roger had not meant to go so far, but when a

To the Gate of Paradise

gentleman has got this distance there is not much farther for him to travel. But at this moment Michelle withdrew her hand, and suddenly disappeared, so suddenly indeed that Roger looked about him amazed, and could not imagine how quickly and silently she must have opened the door of the hut and gone in; for that was what he thought she had done. He waited five minutes, and then himself opened the door, and entering looked about him, expecting to see Michelle. There was no sign of her, however, although he carefully explored every corner by the dim light of the candle. There was but one room, with no loft or other place of concealment. Madame de Beaumanoir was far too deep in her game to notice any one. François had left off playing and was half asleep, after having been well scolded for his inattention half a dozen times that evening. Berwick flashed an inquiring look at Roger, and Roger shook his head, and disappeared as silently as he had come in.

Outside he saw that it was far easier for Michelle to disappear unseen around the corner of the little hut than to go inside, and wondered at his own stupidity in seeking her there. And he was deeply vexed and his masculine self-love was wounded at the moment she had chosen to leave him.

The place was in the heart of the forest, with only a small spot cleared about it. Bright as the moon shone, all was black under the branches of the solemn larches and firs. Roger walked about, listening intently for the fluttering sound of Michelle's dress, or her light footstep. He made a circle around the hut, calling softly at intervals, "Mademoiselle! Mademoiselle! Where are you?" But there was no response except the dashing of the water over the rocks in the dis-

The House of Egremont

tance, and the occasional lonely cry of an owl that complained to the moon. Roger began to feel annoyed and even a little alarmed. What business had Michelle to go off in that manner, in a forest by night? She might very well be lost for a time, even for the whole night. And there were wolves about—the charcoal-burner had told of seeing them every winter. As this dreadful thought struck him, Michelle's soft voice, just at his elbow, caught his ear.

"Are you looking for me, Mr. Egremont?" she asked.

"Yes," replied Roger, turning to her. They were in a bright patch of moonlight, and he could see her quite well. He was vexed with her, and he showed it.

"You have alarmed me much by going off alone. I have been searching for you for the last half-hour."

"Forgive me the trouble I have caused you," she said, walking toward the hut and looking back at him. Her cloak was around her, but her dark head was bare, and her eyes shone with strange brilliancy.

"I am a very unhappy woman, Mr. Egremont, and, I fear, a guilty one. I came upon this journey to do my duty to my King and to my country, but I am afraid I shall do both more harm than good by my coming, and as for myself and you—ah, I have done infinite harm! We shall both be miserable for the rest of our lives, perhaps."

Roger, following her, was stupefied by her language. She was usually the most intelligible of women, and although she often spoke playfully, no one made the meaning of words clearer than Mademoiselle d'Orantia—this woman renowned for her wit and address. Miserable and guilty! What inexplicable words for her to use! And to tell him so plainly that he was linked with that guilt and misery of which she spoke! It made

To the Gate of Paradise

his heart pound against his ribs,—the mere thought of it.

He walked rapidly, and catching up with her, cried, “*Mademoiselle*, I do not understand;” but she walked so fast and turned her head away so persistently that he could not get another word out of her, and presently they came to the door of the hut, and Roger signing to her to enter first, she went in and left him alone.

Roger remained outside in the chilly night for a time, puzzled and troubled and intoxicated by her words. But presently in his man’s mind came the reflection that women were, after all, fanciful and sensitive creatures, of whom the greatest wits among them were likely to be the most fanciful and sensitive. A man would be a fool who would take them quite literally. Unhappy and guilty — yes, they called themselves unhappy when they missed receiving a love-letter, and wept and raved over trifles, while they could bear the loss of fortune, of health, all that makes life endurable, with smiling composure. And Michelle would call herself guilty if she committed a peccadillo which a man would reckon at not a pin’s consequence; and Roger knew women well enough to recall that the very best of them can, under love or hate, commit deeds of which the mere thought would make a man’s hair to rise on his head.

So, having recovered somewhat from his first dismay, he presently entered the hut. The game was over. Madame de Beaumanoir was wiggling François for not having brought some extra packs of cards with him. Berwick sat on a settle by the fireside, and Michelle was by his side. He was speaking to her kindly, very kindly, and she listened to him with a smile upon her pale lips, but with an expression of so much misery in her dark eyes that it gave Roger a shock.

The House of Egremont

Directly they were separating for the night. The three gentlemen had ensconced themselves in the chaise, and muffled themselves in their cloaks. In five minutes François was snoring. Then Roger said in a low voice to Berwick, —

“When a woman says she is miserable and guilty, I take it she has the vapors — or — or — is in love with a man and cannot see her way to marry him directly. Is not that your opinion?”

“With most women, yes. With all women, no. If Mademoiselle d’Orantia said she was miserable and guilty, I should take it seriously.”

With this for a nightcap, Roger Egremont spent the night.

Next morning it was clear and bright, and they began the descent of the mountains. At every stage they came nearer the springtime.

When, after some days’ travel, they reached the valley of the Moselle, it was full spring, with all its glories. They had then been three weeks on their way.

Michelle had been as sweet, as kind to Roger, as ever she was, — nay, sweeter and kinder. But Roger saw that she avoided, with the utmost art, being alone with him for a moment. This made him receive her kindness somewhat sullenly; he thought a lady who had showed him so much favor as Michelle had done that night at the charcoal-burner’s hut contracted a debt to him of more of the same good treatment. Nevertheless, finding in a contest of wit between them that Michelle was his superior in finesse, he concluded to take his defeats good-humoredly. One thing was certain, he could not say any more to her, or to any woman, concerning his love, than what he had already said, for was he not, so far, a mere gentleman adventurer? But he had a cam-

To the Gate of Paradise

paign before him, under a fighting general, and what might he not accomplish, even in a single campaign? Roger Egremont was of a sanguine nature, which helped him over many of the rough places in life, and he was far too much of a man to think that life was to be spent in Arcady. Rather did he incline to make the most of those bright hours, such as he had known upon that blessed journey, because they were so fleeting — and so fleeting because they were so golden.

They were nearing the end of their travel, and Roger remembered that the principality of Orlamunde lay between the Rhine and the Moselle and they were then in the beautiful Moselle country. They followed a straight course, crossing many times the bright, winding river, that now hides all its loveliness in dark woods, and then reveals it all in fair fields and meadows. The season was far advanced, the vineyards were sprouting. Nature daily and hourly performed miracles of change and beauty before their eyes.

At last, on a heavenly April evening, toward sunset, they caught sight, from a wooded height, of a distant silver thread. It was the Rhine.

They spurred forward. Michelle had carried out her promise, and had made the whole journey from France in her saddle, and was then riding between Roger and Berwick. She looked at Berwick and said in a strange voice, "Yonder is the Rhine."

"And Orlamunde but five miles away from this spot," replied Berwick.

Roger turned in his saddle to survey the country they had just passed over. It was one of those moments when he realized that there was something in this expedition known to all but him and it gave him discomfort.

In a little while they reached a small but comfortable

The House of Egremont

beast showed some signs of fatigue, and must be attended to by his master, and not by a hireling.

Roger remained away a long time. He wished not to intrude himself until much time for discussion had passed. He walked about the fields, and always in the direction of the Rhine, so that he saw the river quite plainly. The evenings were long, and although the moon did not now rise till past midnight, the sky was bright with opaline light, and a star or two shone beautifully in the western horizon. It was nearly eight o'clock when he turned homeward, and it was an hour before the lights of the inn came in sight.

As he was passing through the little wood which lay behind the garden of the inn, he was surprised to see Michelle standing under the trees. He went up to her, saying, —

“The beauty of the evening tempted me to go afar.”

“And you left us free to discuss the affair which brought us here. Ah, Mr. Egremont, you are not a man to deceive, even when you try.”

“It was very right that I should leave you, *mademoiselle*,” replied Roger, courteously; and then, catching sight of Michelle’s face, he said, —

“I hope that your errand here will be for your happiness.”

“It will not,” she said calmly, “for my errand is to marry the Prince of Orlamunde.”

Although it was night, and there was no moon, yet could Roger Egremont see the Princess Michelle’s face plainly, and she could see his. At first he was so dazed by her words that he looked like a man suddenly struck a blow from behind, but quickly his countenance changed as his consciousness began to work of itself. The Prince of Orlamunde! Was he old or young? Was he

To the Gate of Paradise

"We look our last on native shores,
We grasp our oars, and cry,
Adieu, for evermore, my love!
Adieu, for evermore!

"The soldier comes back from the war,
The sailor recrosses the sea;
But I? I have left my love, to return no more,
My love, to return no more.

"When the day is done, and the wings of night
Spread their shadow over all;
And each gives himself to the sweets of sleep,
For me — I think of one who is far away.
And in the long, long night, I weep for my love,
For the long, long night, I weep."

Roger put so much feeling into what he sang that it touched every heart, and Michelle's eyes filled with tears, at which Roger's grew bright with triumph. And suddenly Madame de Beaumanoir's voice cut the air, —

"Now that we have reached within five miles of Orlamunde we can talk openly about the affair which brings us all here. I love to talk of things I know, and it has been a mortal trial to me to hold my tongue, especially as we all know the whole thing except Mr. Egremont."

Roger rose instantly, polite, but a little disconcerted. He supposed that the secret affair was some political measure connected with the relations of France and the little principality of Orlamunde, and the measure the King had confided to the ladies and to Berwick. François Delaunay knew it, but that was natural enough, considering that he was the ostensible protector of his aunt and cousin on their journey.

Roger made a good excuse for leaving the company; he must go and look after Merrylegs. The faithful

The House of Egremont

beast showed some signs of fatigue, and must be attended to by his master, and not by a hireling.

Roger remained away a long time. He wished not to intrude himself until much time for discussion had passed. He walked about the fields, and always in the direction of the Rhine, so that he saw the river quite plainly. The evenings were long, and although the moon did not now rise till past midnight, the sky was bright with opaline light, and a star or two shone beautifully in the western horizon. It was nearly eight o'clock when he turned homeward, and it was an hour before the lights of the inn came in sight.

As he was passing through the little wood which lay behind the garden of the inn, he was surprised to see Michelle standing under the trees. He went up to her, saying, —

“The beauty of the evening tempted me to go afar.”

“And you left us free to discuss the affair which brought us here. Ah, Mr. Egremont, you are not a man to deceive, even when you try.”

“It was very right that I should leave you, *mademoiselle*,” replied Roger, courteously; and then, catching sight of Michelle’s face, he said, —

“I hope that your errand here will be for your happiness.”

“It will not,” she said calmly, “for my errand is to marry the Prince of Orlamunde.”

Although it was night, and there was no moon, yet could Roger Egremont see the Princess Michelle’s face plainly, and she could see his. At first he was so dazed by her words that he looked like a man suddenly struck a blow from behind, but quickly his countenance changed as his consciousness began to work of itself. The Prince of Orlamunde! Was he old or young? Was he

To the Gate of Paradise

a comely man or a hunchback? Was he marrying her for love, or was she being sold in a market? All these thoughts came roaring and rushing through his mind at once. Was she marrying for love? Ah, no. He knew the answer to that. He remembered that night by the charcoal-burner's hut; those days together; those times when she recalled to him words that he had spoken, mentioning the very day and hour and place when they had passed his lips. And the thought brought rage quick and strong. All the time she was amusing herself with him,—mere soldier of fortune that he was, with a long sword and a short purse; and he had told her all—all—all,—confessions about his behavior in Newgate gaol, things that he had been ashamed to tell any human being—and she was laughing at him all the while, and going to marry the Prince of Orlamunde, princeling of a territory scarce as big as the estate of Egremont,—living, no doubt, in a kind of sixpenny magnificence, selling his country to the French King for a hundred louis d'or a month, perhaps. Oh, what a wretch must that Prince of Orlamunde be!

Michelle, watching his changing face growing dark with wrath, thought, as she had done more than once, how anger disfigured him. He was a dashing and personable man when the world went well with him, but let him but be crossed, and he was positively ugly.

He turned on her after a while, saying impudently,—

“Let me felicitate you, Mademoiselle d'Orantia. No doubt you are making a very splendid marriage. I understood before leaving France that the Prince of Orlamunde had an army,—a whole regiment, I am told,—which both the King of France and the Prince of Orange are chaffering for. You will live in a palace, have ladies-in-waiting, and a paraphernalia not quite so

The House of Egremont

grand as that of the Queen of France, but something like it. And there will be Maintenons and Montespan, most likely — ”

Roger stopped. The devil that had got hold of him in Newgate prison and had made a beast of him was now clawing him, but some spark of the gentleman in him checked his insults to a woman.

“ You are quite right in all you say,” replied Michelle, in a thrilling voice. “ And I shall hate it all, as you know, — the trumpery state, the small politics. I know of no woman who can bear them more ill than I. But a greater misery than all has befallen me. I go to be the wife of the Prince of Orlamunde when I love you, Roger Egremont, and would rather be your wife with nothing but the clothes upon my back than to be the Queen of France. And I am an ambitious woman too. And until we made this journey together I actually thought with pleasure of being Princess of Orlamunde.”

Roger felt his knees giving way under him. There was a bench near the tree where they stood, and he sat down upon it. Michelle stood up before him, straight and slim in the half-light. The sky was now full of stars, and by their pale splendor he could see every look that passed over her speaking face.

“ But if you love me,” he stammered, “ it is not yet too late.”

“ Yes, it is too late.”

The echo of her words was indescribably melancholy; a night-bird's sad cry quivering through the trees seemed like its echo.

“ Yes, it is too late. To-morrow the Prince sends his people to meet me here, and then next day the marriage takes place. Of course there is a bargain in the matter. The King of France wishes certain things of the Prince

To the Gate of Paradise

of Orlamunde. The Prince demanded not only money, but a wife from France, and I, poor unfortunate that I am, agreed to be the sacrifice. I thought it great and noble to immolate myself for my King, but that was before I loved you. Now it is too late to turn back; even Berwick has gently warned me of this when he saw with what a heart of stone I come to Orlamunde. But after all, what does the happiness or misery of one woman matter? It is only the eternal passing. If I had known happiness, it would have been gone from me; none can keep it. And, at least, I have had some moments of perfect joy with you. They were few and short, but many people live through a long life without ever knowing one moment's complete joy."

Roger sat listening eagerly and angrily to every word, and then he burst forth, —

"But why did you bring me upon this devilish journey?" — the evil spirit in him making him think first of his own humiliation. "Berwick, the Duchess, François Delaunay, even the maître d'hôtel, — ha! ha! — must have seen how it was with me." Roger rose and struck his forehead.

"It is that I am a very bad woman," replied Michelle. "Berwick suggested you, and I said no word. But, at least, I did not then know all my feelings for you, all of yours for me. I said to myself: 'This poor English gentleman is the only man who ever pleased my fancy; why not indulge myself with his company?' You see you are not the only selfish one. You think now only of *your* pain. I thought only of *my* pleasure. And then — I know not how — from that morning in the Cathedral at Meaux, or perhaps before — only, I had not spent two full days in your company before I knew how it was with me. And now let there be no more pretence

The House of Egremont

between us. Do not reckon me to be the best woman that lives; you are quite as good a man as I am a woman. It is a continual danger for us to be together. Reckon on your own strength, and know that mine is no greater. We must part. I have done wrong enough both to you and to the Prince of Orlamunde; not that it really distresses me to think of him,—I told you I am not a very good woman; his sufferings would not give me much pain. Yours would drive me to distraction if I saw them. So I must not see them. There are but two more days, as I told you. I am to reach Orlamunde to-morrow and be married the next day, and then you must go. On the day after to-morrow, — do you understand? — we part, never to meet again. Two more sunrises, two more sunsets, two more nights of pain, and everything will be over.”

Roger remained silent. She had ever an eloquent and persuasive tongue, and as she spoke, the searching melancholy of her eyes, the ineffable sadness of her voice cut him to the heart. After a pause she continued, —

“It is very hard for you, but these things are not to men what they are to women. It is much harder for me. I shall have a husband whom I hate and who will hate me, for I foresee it; I have a presentiment at this moment. But I deserve it, having done much to bring this shame and sorrow on us both.”

After having cruelly and selfishly blamed and insulted her, Roger suddenly changed; he thought of her only as a lamb soon to be handed over to the wolf. He rose, and opening his arms wide, cried, “You have brought me to the gates of Paradise, and have shown me the glory of the beauty within, and then have thrust

To the Gate of Paradise

me away. But you have the heavier part, the heavier part!"

And then their lips met and their souls rushed together. Time ceased for them. When they slowly came back to the world about them and saw the pitying stars shining overhead, and heard again the night-bird's melancholy call, Michelle retreated from him.

"I have, indeed, the heavier part," she said, bursting into tears. "Besides losing you, I can never see my own country again. I can never be free from a husband I hate already, and I have never seen him. I shall not find here one single friend; that my soul tells me. Truly, am I punished."

"But, at least," cried Roger, approaching her as she withdrew herself, weeping, from him, "We have had, as you say, some days of happiness; we have had some moments — that night outside the hut in the mountains, this minute just past, — when we have known ecstasy. Neither the Prince of Orlamunde nor heaven nor hell can rob us of *that*!"

As he spoke, she turned and fled from him. He took a step forward and then checked himself. He saw her slight figure flitting through the trees, and then she disappeared in the darkness of the night toward the inn.

Soon afterward Berwick, sitting at a table examining a map in the common room, which was on the ground floor of the little inn, heard the door open behind him, and Michelle, like a ghost, passed noiselessly through the room. As Berwick respectfully rose she halted involuntarily. She was as white as death, and she passed her hand over her face with an unconscious gesture of despair; then going upon her way he heard her mount the stairs. She went quickly half-way up, then stopped.

The House of Egremont

"Can I assist you, mademoiselle?" asked Berwick from the foot of the stairs.

"No, I thank you; no one at all can be of the least assistance to me," replied Michelle's voice from the dark stairway. In pity Berwick left her and returned to his maps.

It was close on to midnight when Roger Egremont returned. Berwick had become so interested in his maps and a memorandum he was writing that he had forgotten all else for the time, and when Roger came forward Berwick began to speak as if all that had been passing in his mind was already known to Roger.

"Look at this," he cried. "If we can secure these two places and fortify them as we should, we can make the passage of the Rhine at our pleasure, and halt any enemy who comes over on our side within a hundred miles. I shall not, however, trust this Prince of Orlamunde's word for the work being done, but I shall make the drawings myself, as the King of France authorized me, and send a trusty person in three months to see that all is properly done, and that he does not take our mortars to defend his capital. The whole town could be planted in the Hall of Mirrors at Versailles."

Berwick stopped. Roger had come forward naturally enough and seated himself to inspect the map, but his face looked as pale and strange as Michelle's had looked.

"What ails you, man?" asked Berwick, kindly, laying his hand on Roger's shoulder.

"I have had a blow," replied Roger, breathing heavily. "I feel it very much now; but I shall be myself tomorrow, never fear. Now show me the drawings."

Berwick said not a word, but showed the maps, talked, and explained things far more than was his

To the Gate of Paradise

wont. Roger Egremont, usually the more talkative of the two, spoke not a single word. Occasionally his eyes, commonly so bright and clear, now dull and expressionless, wandered uneasily about the room. When a neighboring church clock struck one, Berwick rose.

"Come," he said, "a man must sleep sometimes. We shall be awake betimes in the morning. All of Orlamunde will be here to meet the Princesse Michelle. She is to marry the Prince, you know."

Berwick turned his back as he spoke to Roger, and went up the narrow stair.

Roger had a little room over Berwick's head, and under the sloping roof. All night long Berwick heard him tossing and groaning and muttering. At daylight he became quiet, and Berwick, whose rest he had much disturbed, fell into a deep sleep. From this he was awakened at eight o'clock by the sound of merry music, the clang of horns and trumpets, and the songs of maidens. The peasants around about had made bold to salute the young lady who was to become the bride of their Prince. Berwick saw from his window Michelle, beautifully dressed, standing on a little balcony, bathed in the white light of a lovely morning; she was kissing her hand to a flock of merry peasant girls who were flinging down spring flowers before her — anemones, the sweet narcissus, jonquils and crocus and violets — and singing verses made for the occasion. She was smiling and gracious — for was she not, the very next day, to marry their Prince?

CHAPTER XIII

THE PALACE OF MONPLAISIR — THE ABODE OF THE
MOST HIGH, MOST MIGHTY, AND MOST PUISSANT
PRINCE OF ORLAMUNDE.

THE glory and beauty of that April day would have made itself felt to a condemned man on his way to execution. The earth was like heaven — so fresh, so fragrant, so fair. The sky was one great sapphire; the little airs that blew wantonly kissed the new-born leaves in love and sport. The vineyards smiled; the little river Orla, a tributary of the Rhine, laughed; the birds and the butterflies rioted in the sunshine.

The inn was astir early, the peasants singing around it; all Orlamunde was released from work that day. At nine o'clock a courier had arrived from Orlamunde, notifying the party from France that state coaches, ladies and gentlemen in waiting, and a guard of honor were on their way to meet and greet their new princess, and would arrive within the hour.

The courier reported to Berwick, who, as representing the King of France, received the highest deference. Roger Egremont, as his second in rank, stood with him. When the courier, with many bows and flourishes, had concluded his tale, Berwick asked briefly, —

“And the letter for the Princess?”

“What letter, please your grace?” the man replied, *shuffling* uneasily on his feet.

The Palace of Monplaisir

"The letter from the Prince of Orlamunde to the Princess d'Orantia," replied Berwick, in a voice of thunder, meant to be reported to the Prince.

"There is no letter, please your grace," the courier answered, actually blushing for his master.

Berwick turned to Roger, and said in the same loud tone, meant to be overheard, —

"What will his Majesty the King of France say to this?"

There was great life, movement, and bustle all about the inn, many persons to be seen and things attended to, and as François Delaunay was a natural-born incapable, much of it fell to Roger Egremont. He did it all perfectly well, being quite composed and master of himself, but he had the sensations of a man ridden by a nightmare.

At ten o'clock the whole party except the Princess Michelle and Madame de Beaumanoir were collected in the garden of the inn. An arch of flowers had been erected at the entrance to the garden, and from it to the doorway of the inn was a double row of young girls in white, their aprons full of violets and hyacinths. And pressing close on all sides were laughing, sun-burned peasants, men, women, and children.

The highroad, broad and straight and bordered with sweet-scented lindens, was in full view. Presently the silvery echo of a bugle was heard, and a number of mounted trumpeters heralded the advance of the state coaches and escort. The road had been newly watered and no dust obscured the pageant. First came the trumpeters in a handsome livery of red and gold. They were followed by a mounted escort. Next came the state coaches, two great machines of gilt and glass, one — the most splendid — empty, the other one

The House of Egremont

containing two ladies, very magnificently dressed, and two gentlemen of the court, blazing with uniforms and orders; then followed another detachment of the guard of honor. This escort, of five hundred men, was about half the whole military strength of Orlamunde.

As the second coach drew up before the arch of flowers, the two gentlemen of the court descended, and assisted the two ladies out. Berwick and Roger Egremont, who stood together at the entrance to the garden, heard a murmur as the first lady was recognized.

"The Italian woman," was whispered in the hearing of Berwick and Roger Egremont. "Then the Prince could not persuade the Countess Bertha to come. Ah! there is Madame von Roda. She was more obliging; but they say the Prince is tired of her—and her husband has come back too. Where is he to-day anyhow?"

Berwick and Roger exchanged glances. This, then, was the greeting, the meeting, the escort which the Prince of Orlamunde had prepared for his bride. The lady known as the Italian woman, Madame Marochetti by name, was assisted to descend from the coach by the two gentlemen, Count Bernstein, and Baron Reichenbach. Madame Marochetti, a tall, black-browed creature with a walk like an ostrich, wore a scowl which would have disconcerted an ogre. Madame von Roda then alighted. She looked like a grisette of the Palais Royal dressed for a masquerade, and had a foolish, pretty face. The gentlemen, in manners and appearance, matched the ladies.

Berwick, advancing, formally introduced himself, and then introduced Roger Egremont to these noble representatives of Orlamunde; and a signal being given, Madame de Beaumanoir appeared at the door of the

The Palace of Monplaisir

inn, leaning upon the arm of François Delaunay, who was very handsomely dressed, and looked frightened to death.

Never had Roger Egremont seen the laughing devil in Madame de Beaumanoir's eye more rampant than at that moment. The state assumed by Orlamunde really amused her vastly, and she appraised instantly, and at their true value, the ladies and gentlemen who had been selected to receive their new Princess.

Madame de Beaumanoir had not thought it worth while to adorn herself especially for the occasion. She wore an ancient green brocade, which both Roger and Berwick recalled she had told them she had worn in the glorious days of King Charles the Second. On her head, however, sparkled a splendid coronet, — thus emphasizing the fact that she could have dressed herself grandly had she desired. There was much bowing and courtesying, Madame de Beaumanoir going through it with an indescribable air of affected seriousness.

"And how is my cousin of Orlamunde? Very well and anxiously expecting his bride," she said, answering her own question before anybody else could. "Well, I hope he will like what I bring him. But one never can tell about these foreign marriages. At all events, you seem to have a very pleasant little country here, and I expect to stay as long as I find it agreeable."

Roger distinctly saw one of the court gentlemen shudder at this, while Madame de Beaumanoir, putting up her glass, coolly surveyed the two ladies from the crowns of their heads to the soles of their rather large feet, exactly as if she were examining a couple of new and curious reptiles.

There was a pause, broken by a burst of young voices that rang in the morning air, not unlike the sweet,

The House of Egremont

shrill bird-songs; the white-robed girls were singing their bridal song; and Michelle appeared, walking alone down the broad garden path, flower-strewn.

She wore a gorgeous satin robe of the color of a pale sky. Over her shoulders was a rich mantle of velvet of a darker blue, embroidered in gold and pearls with the arms of Orlamunde. Her head was bare, except for a flashing coronet that glittered in the sunshine. She walked with slow and stately grace, her head uplifted, and bore not the slightest trace of either fear or agitation.

Roger Egremont had never reckoned her as a strictly beautiful woman, although he had sometimes seen her blaze forth in sudden loveliness. But to-day she had a kind of unearthly beauty, that went to men's heads like wine. A great, involuntary shout rose from the watching and waiting people, who were dazzled by her, — a rich blush covering her creamy cheeks, her black eyes like twin stars, her red mouth half curved in a smile. It occurred to Roger Egremont that the gorgeous dress she wore had something to do with the splendor of her beauty. He remembered that Bess Lukens—he had scarce remembered there was such a person in the world as Bess Lukens, since he left France—always looked handsomer in a stuff gown, with a linen cap and apron; some women were made for grandeur and some were not. Michelle was one of the first-named.

And then she was curtseying to her new ladies, and Madame Marochetti was looking at her with insolent curiosity, which Michelle bore with cool composure; it was not in the power of a Marochetti or a von Roda to disconcert this proud Princess. And the gentlemen were bowing to the ground before her, and she was

The Palace of Monplaisir

accepting their assistance into the coach with a splendid air which would have graced an empress.

Madame Marochetti and Madame von Roda then got into the coach in which Michelle was, seating themselves on the front seat, Michelle sitting alone on the back seat. They bent their impudent gaze on her, but met with a cool disdain in her answering glance, that gave them small satisfaction.

Madame de Beaumanoir, with the two gentlemen-in-waiting, got into the second coach. Berwick, Roger Egremont, and François Delaunay rode their horses.

It was five miles to Orlamunde, and every step of the way there was welcome in some form—cheering, singing peasants by the roadside, triumphal arches, and flowers. The town of Orlamunde presently came in sight. A handsome stone bridge across the river led to the main part of it. There was on an eminence a dingy old building, half fortress, half schloss, in which the lords of Orlamunde had dwelt for many centuries. But as, like most of the princelings of that day, the Princes of Orlamunde copied as far as they could the methods and manners of Louis le Grand, a brand new palace, a miniature Versailles, whose towers and pinnacles gleamed whitely above the young greenery of a large park, was visible to the left of the town. A broad, straight avenue, as broad and as straight as the terrace at St. Germain, led to this white palace, amid its park and gardens. Clipped trees bordered the great avenue, and at intervals were statues, fountains, and bridges; and a noble marble terrace, with fountains of spouting dolphins, led up to the main entrance of this palace, named Monplaisir by its builder, the father of the present Prince.

All this, Roger Egremont saw as he rode briskly

The House of Egremont

behind the carriage containing the woman who was to be mistress of this sweet domain,—that is, as far as Madame Marochetti and Countess von Roda would let her, and the Countess Bertha, as yet unseen, but whom he justly reckoned to be the worst of the lot. Nothing escaped his eye, although he felt as if he were acting a part in a bad dream. He had expected to see poverty and squalor on every hand, showing the price the people of Orlamunde had to pay for having so magnificent a prince, and was rather disappointed at the general signs of prosperity, both in the country and the little capital.

And, lo, they were approaching the ancient gateway of the town, with its drawbridge and stone gate-house pierced for arquebuses. And there was a glittering procession made up of the whole court, awaiting the bride, and making a splendor of color in the sunny noon, with the ivy-clad gateway and battlements for background. And in the very centre of the gateway, sat on a noble roan horse the Prince of Orlamunde.

Roger Egremont, who had keen eyes, studied this man closely, as they neared each other. He had a well made figure, and his face was not unhandsome, but his eye, his mouth, his expression,—all that part of his physiognomy which a man makes for himself was odious and despicable beyond comparison. As they neared the gate, Berwick whispered,—

“If I were a woman, I should not like to be his wife.”

As the coach of state drew up, the Prince wheeled his horse aside, took off his plumed hat, and bowed low to Michelle. An equerry then quickly opening the coach door, Madame Marochetti and the von Roda descended. What a look the Italian woman flashed

The Palace of Monplaisir

from her eyes!—and what a stealthy grin the Prince flashed back at her! The Prince entered the coach, and side by side he and Michelle entered the little capital together.

The procession, augmented by the Prince's party, by a civic parade, and the rest of the army of Orlamunde, proceeded by slow degrees to the dingy old schloss. Here Michelle was to spend the last day of her maiden life, and to be married on the morrow; for the former Princes of Orlamunde had built a chapel in the schloss, but the last Prince had not remembered to include a chapel in his new palace of Monplaisir; nor had his son and successor repaired this singular oversight. Therefore must the marriage ceremony take place at the schloss.

Arrived in the old courtyard, with a cheering crowd outside, the Prince descended from the coach, and assisted Michelle to the pavement. Roger, amid the throng of court people, stood close to Berwick, and as he caught sight of the Prince's face, observed that he looked as black as midnight. Evidently his first interview with his handsome bride had not been wholly satisfactory. And as for Madame Marochetti, she looked like an embodied thunder-cloud. Madame von Roda wore an air of meek resignation. The Countess Bertha had, so far, not appeared.

There was an hour of rest for the party, an hour spent by Roger Egremont in the room assigned him in an old tower of the schloss. It was one of the most wretched hours of his life. Being essentially of a noble nature, and disposed to fight against the devil which could not wholly be dislodged from him—or from any other man, for that matter—his own misery was hugely increased by the prospect of Michelle's torments. For

The House of Egremont

that she could ever be happy, or even be decently treated by the Prince of Orlamunde, he felt perfectly sure was impossible from the little he had already seen and heard. Had there been a prospect of her happiness, had her husband been a man whose hand he could take, whose word he could believe — ah, it would have been different. He had made no protestations of unselfish love to Michelle the night before, — nay, he had then only spoken of his own hurt and humiliation — but he forgot his own sufferings in thinking of hers. And as she had truly said, hers would be the heavier part. He would go forth a disappointed man, compelled to find in life the best substitute he could for happiness. She was chained to a man she would soon hate, if she did not already hate him, insulted by the presence of the women he placed about her, alone in a foreign land; her case was indeed hard. He could have groaned aloud as he thought of her.

At two o'clock came a banquet in the great Ritter-saal of the schloss. The guests were placed at the vast table, Roger in a seat of honor next Berwick. When all were seated, a flourish of silver trumpets announced the entrance of the Prince and Michelle. They entered, preceded by the Italian woman and Count Bernstein. The Prince led Michelle to the head of the table, and placed himself by her, and the banquet proceeded.

Roger Egremont had been accustomed to seeing men drink, both in England and in France. But he never saw any man drink as did the Prince of Orlamunde, who remained, however, apparently sober. He talked occasionally with Michelle, and exchanged a few words with Madame de Beaumanoir, who sat on his left. The old duchess was singularly quiet. Roger had expected, from the expression in her sharp, bright old eyes that

The Palace of Monplaisir

morning, that there would be a regular outbreak of sarcasm and impertinence from her; but she was almost polite to her cousin of Orlamunde.

Through the whole tedious affair, lasting some hours, Michelle sat composed and even smiling. Roger would have feared for her less had she shown more feeling, more apprehension at what was before her. But she might have been past all emotion, for any she showed. She did not even wince when, toward the close of the feast, a footman brought the Prince, by his order, a gilt basket containing four puppies, which the Prince fed from his plate, and conversed with, to the absolute neglect of his bride.

When the dinner was over, it was near sunset. As soon as darkness came, there were to be fireworks in the town. Until then, all were free to do as they pleased. Roger, consumed with a furious restlessness, sought Madame de Beaumanoir.

"So you have come to tell me you think my cousin of Orlamunde is a brute," was her greeting, as Roger entered her saloon. "Well, I am of the same mind. I told Michelle not half an hour ago, that she would do well to establish some sort of communication with France, so that if she should be obliged to run away from this precious Prince, with his puppies in gilt baskets and his Marochettis and his von Rodas, she would have a place of refuge."

Was it already gone so far as this? thought Roger, trembling for the woman he loved. It was not, then, his own sad and jealous fancy that made him feel that Michelle was doomed. Madame de Beaumanoir feared for her, Berwick feared for her. Roger listening in bitter silence, the old lady continued: "The Beaumanoirs have an old château, half of it tumbled down,

The House of Egremont

on the frontier near Pont-à-mousson, — a horrid, lonely place. I have told Michelle of it, and how to reach it. She laughed at me — strange girl that she is ; but she may yet be glad to fly to the old rookery of the Château de la Rivière — it stands on a little river.”

Roger said presently, with bitterness, —

“ Mademoiselle d’Orantia is a very courageous woman. She has probably made up her mind to endure her lot. She chose it for herself.”

“ Oh, Lord, yes ! But there are some things flesh and blood cannot endure, as my Lord Clarendon told my blessed prince, King Charles, when he *would* have the Castlemaine woman about his wife, — the one who so hated your father, my dear.”

The wrongs and sorrows of his father did not greatly trouble Roger Egremont then.

Finding that Madame de Beaumanoir rather sharpened the edge of his pain, Roger left her. He met Berwick, and the two walked about the town and its environs until dark. Berwick had the same tale to tell.

“ A thorough-going scoundrel, if ever I saw one, is this precious Prince. I swear, much as I want those two places to fortify on the river bank, I would not, like the French King, have given this fair girl in payment for them. She is but a pawn on the board. Orlamunde — damn him for a rascal ! — wanted the money which the King pretends to give as a dowry with Mademoiselle, — it is no dowry, but a good, big, barefaced bribe, — and the King wanted those two places, on which to mount a couple of dozen cannon, which, with five hundred men, could check the advance of five thousand ; and this girl was simply the human document which attests their evil bargain. And she — rash girl ! — was willing, nay, eager for it in the beginning.”

The Palace of Monplaisir

"And you think she — she — changed?"

Berwick looked down at Roger, who was not so tall as he.

"Yes, — so much, that I was afraid she would turn back on the journey. I had not then seen this Prince, and I tried to warn Mademoiselle d'Orantia that she had gone too far to retreat. God forgive me if I advised her ill. But I shall not leave this white dove quite unprotected amid the vultures. I have full power from His Majesty, and not a stiver does this scoundrel Prince get, unless his wife is willing to live with him. The day Orlamunde becomes intolerable to her, that day does the Prince cease to receive the two hundred thousand livres which we pay, together with this unfortunate girl, for Mondberg and Arnheim. This I shall make plain before I leave this cursed place."

At night the fireworks were very splendid. Roger, standing on a balcony near Michelle, tried to watch her, but Countess von Roda claimed his attention. She liked the looks of this clean-limbed, bright-eyed young man better than the tall and silent Berwick — she had already found out his name — the Pike. But she thought Monsieur d'Egremont, as she called him, rather a sulky fellow. Not only Roger's name became French, but everything at Orlamunde was more French than at Paris. The court people uttered not a word of any other language but French, which they spoke with a fearful accent. Following the fireworks was a concert, in which the songs were all French, and the fiddles fiddled only French airs. Michelle went through it all with the same smiling courage she had shown from the beginning. It was midnight before all was over. The marriage was to take place next day at noon.

Roger Egremont went to his room, to rest and to

The House of Egremont

think — but not expecting to sleep. However, throwing himself upon his bed, sleep suddenly overtook him — and he lay in a heavy and dreamless slumber until next morning, when the sun was high in the heavens. He was wakened by the blowing of silver trumpets in the courtyard of the schloss, in honor of Michelle's wedding day.

Men have been known to sleep the night before execution, and they invariably make a careful toilet when preparing for that interesting occasion. This occurred to Roger when, after having been immaculately shaved by Berwick's man, he proceeded to dress himself carefully in his suit of green and silver, with his waistcoat of rose brocade. His chestnut curls, innocent of powder, — for he could not bring himself to wear anything but his own hair, — lay upon his well made shoulders; his complexion was ruddy with health and youth; in short, had he been preparing for his own hanging, he could not have been more solicitous to make a good appearance. And he succeeded so well that, although he had nothing on this earth which he could actually call his own except the clothes on his back, and a few more in his portmanteau, and his horse, Merry-legs, he might very well have pleased a lady's eye — as he undoubtedly had pleased Countess von Roda's. He esteemed the lady but lightly, however, and had let several occasions for impudence to her pass unnoticed the night before — much to her disgust. He was long in dressing, and when he was at last through, Berwick knocked at his door. Berwick, too, was very nobly dressed, with his orders upon his breast, but he looked even more grave than usual.

"God forgive me for any part I had in this affair," he said.

The Palace of Monplaisir

At noon, the chapel in the schloss was a blaze of gold and color; the Cardinal-Archbishop upon his throne, with shining mitre and jewelled crozier; the altar, with its robed priests, and glowing with a myriad of wax-lights; the sanctuary lamp, like a great burning ruby; the sun sifting through the gorgeous stained windows, — all, all was beauty.

The bridal procession entered to the sound of joyous music, — the bridegroom, in his mantle of state, leading his bride; Michelle, in a white glory of satin and lace and pearls, her rich hair unbound and flowing over her shoulders, a circlet of diamonds gleaming upon her head, two beautiful boys holding up her long train of rose-colored velvet, sewn with jewels and bordered with ermine, — looking, as she had done the day before, appealingly beautiful. With bell, book, and candle was she married to the most high, most mighty, and most puissant Karl, Prince of Orlamunde, with many other titles and dignities. And he unblushingly took the vows of faithfulness upon himself, calling God to witness them.

The marriage being over, a loud crashing of bells, and clanging of trumpets and horns, and thunder of drums, and roar of artillery, drowned the bridal music as the procession passed from the chapel to the Hall of Knights, and Michelle was proclaimed by all her new dignities. Then there was another procession along the great avenue to Monplaisir, where a banquet and ball were to follow; for Prince Karl could by no means endure the old schloss, and would not remain a moment in it longer than he could help.

The April sun shone on the state carriages, horsed with four and six horses, on cavaliers, on coaches, and on a merry throng of townspeople and country folk lin-

The House of Egremont

ing the broad avenue, where the horse-chestnuts were pushing their pale pink leaves through their green sheaths. And the fair palace shone beautifully in the sun, the dolphins on the marble terrace spouting wine, and a whole regiment of soldiers — the regiment for which both Louis of France and William of Orange were chaffering — was paraded, and it was very grand and glorious; quite like Versailles, so Roger Egremont told several ladies, who nearly embraced him in their ecstasy at this compliment.

The banquet was very gay, and the Prince drank quite as much wine as the day before. The puppies did not appear this time. Madame Marochetti enlivened things by fainting, or pretending to faint, just as the bride's health was proposed. The Countess von Roda, who still fancied Roger, and sat next him at the banquet, whispered to him, sadly, "My friend, my heart is wrung. I am a deserted woman. You cannot have been at Orlamunde twenty-four hours without knowing that I—I—was once loved by the dear Prince." And then she fell to upon a fat capon and devoured it to the bones, meanwhile telling her mournful tale in Roger's ear; he, inwardly raging and palpitating with agony, forced to laugh, in spite of himself; for the sorrows of Madame von Roda, as she told them, would have made a man laugh on his way to the gallows.

The ball followed in the evening, — more lights, more music, more everything. Roger was not now reckoned good enough to dance with Michelle in the *minuet de la cour*, so he could only stand off and watch her as she moved with splendid grace through the dance, her husband quite oblivious of her, and his attention fixed, this time, not upon puppies, but upon a handsome

The Palace of Monplaisir

lady, who chose to appear and to sit in a conspicuous place in a very melancholy attitude. This was the Countess Bertha, who, her curiosity having finally got the better of her chagrin, chose to appear at the ball. And when the dance was over, she came up and demanded to be presented to the Princess of Orlamunde by the Prince himself. This, that worthy person did, with much obsequiousness, and was received by the Princess with perfect dignity and composure.

The eyes of all, however, were fixed on the great archway leading into the Saloon of the Swans, a magnificent room, with walls of mirrors and silver swans embossed upon them. Overhead, the painted ceiling told the story of Leda and her lover, Jupiter. In this saloon, tables were laid for play. The Duke of Mayerne, esteemed the prince of gamblers in Europe, was present; already, ten of his lackeys in green velvet, with gold chains around their necks, were bringing in little bags of gold, over which they stood guard. The dancing was soon over,—play being the more fascinating of the two great amusements of the court of Orlamunde,—and the whole company trooped into the saloon to play primero and quadrille. At the Prince's own table were his new-made Princess, Madame de Beaumanoir, the Countess Bertha, the Duke of Mayerne, the Duke of Berwick, Count Bernstein, and Madame Marochetti. Roger surveyed the party, and his heart swelled for Michelle. Except Berwick, and Madame de Beaumanoir, what company was this for her? Professed gamblers, low women. Berwick was the only gentleman — nay, the only man, — at the table.

As the play progressed, he heard Berwick utter an exclamation, and then say, smilingly, "I beg your pardon, Monsieur; I was mistaken, I see," and go on play-

The House of Egremont

ing. Soon, Madame de Beaumanoir's shrill tones rose over the murmur of voices, the occasional bursts of laughter, —

"Oh, come now, Prince! play your cards straight, like a gentleman."

"Madam," said the Prince, scowling at her, "pray, proceed; is it not your play?"

"God knows," replied Madame de Beaumanoir; "I never played in so queer a game before. I must be getting old — or the cards are drunk."

At this moment Countess von Roda whispered in Roger's ear, —

"And the Countess Bertha was asked to the Prince's table, and I was not! And she has been most unamiable to the Prince about his marriage; while Madame Marochetti and I actually went to meet the bride!"

"I dare say you are as good as either of them," bluntly replied Roger; and then a laugh from the Prince cut the air; it was so harsh, so discordant — Roger had never heard him laugh before, and it was not pleasant to hear.

That evening was twenty-four hours long to Roger Egremont. At twelve o'clock it was time to leave. Roger, with Berwick, went to bid the Prince and Princess good-night; Roger mentally resolving that it should also be good-bye. For one moment, as he stood bowing before Michelle, their eyes met, and they looked steadily at each other. That look was, in some sort, a pledge of eternal constancy. He hardly knew how he got out of the palace, and found himself walking along the avenue of horse-chestnuts, the statues standing out like ghosts in the misty light of a languid yellow moon. Berwick was with him, and stalked along silently. He spoke



THEY WAIT TO BID THE PRINCESS GOOD-NIGHT

THE NEW YORK PUBLIC LIBRARY
ASTOR LENOX TILDEN FOUNDATION
1900

The Palace of Monplaisir

but once, and then in a voice of concentrated rage and disgust.

"This palace of Monplaisir is a den of thieves. They cheat at cards; the women deceive the men, the men think they deceive the women. Oh, what a hell will that poor girl find herself in!"

Roger spoke not one word until they came near the town.

"I will not go back to my lodging just now. I like the fresh air and the wind; it does one good after the nauseous company we have been in. Can we not leave to-morrow?"

"By God, we shall," replied Berwick. "My errand is done. I have now only to do my work as a soldier; and as for fearing to offend that miserable apology for a man and a prince, he is worth no man's enmity."

"Arrange it so that I may be excused from a farewell visit," asked Roger.

"I will. You must have a cold and fever to-morrow, which will only abate at the hour fixed for us to start. I will be out of this place, please God, by noon."

Roger turned off from the town into the fields and woods. He wished to be away from the sight of that white palace, from which the lights in the windows were disappearing one by one. Yet it seemed as if he could always see it whenever he looked backward, until he climbed the wooded heights around the town, and plunged into the heart of the forest.

He wandered about in the woods the whole night. He felt that, had he been cooped up in that one room in the dingy schloss, he should have gone mad. But in his agony he again became the primitive man. As at Egremont, he found a kind of solace in the moist earth, the solemn trees, the inscrutable stars. At least, pain was

The House of Egremont

on the frontier near Pont-à-mousson, — a horrid, lonely place. I have told Michelle of it, and how to reach it. She laughed at me — strange girl that she is ; but she may yet be glad to fly to the old rookery of the Château de la Rivière — it stands on a little river.”

Roger said presently, with bitterness, —

“ Mademoiselle d’Orantia is a very courageous woman. She has probably made up her mind to endure her lot. She chose it for herself.”

“ Oh, Lord, yes ! But there are some things flesh and blood cannot endure, as my Lord Clarendon told my blessed prince, King Charles, when he *would* have the Castlemaine woman about his wife, — the one who so hated your father, my dear.”

The wrongs and sorrows of his father did not greatly trouble Roger Egremont then.

Finding that Madame de Beaumanoir rather sharpened the edge of his pain, Roger left her. He met Berwick, and the two walked about the town and its environs until dark. Berwick had the same tale to tell.

“ A thorough-going scoundrel, if ever I saw one, is this precious Prince. I swear, much as I want those two places to fortify on the river bank, I would not, like the French King, have given this fair girl in payment for them. She is but a pawn on the board. Orlamunde — damn him for a rascal ! — wanted the money which the King pretends to give as a dowry with Mademoiselle, — it is no dowry, but a good, big, barefaced bribe, — and the King wanted those two places, on which to mount a couple of dozen cannon, which, with five hundred men, could check the advance of five thousand ; and this girl was simply the human document which attests their evil bargain. And she — rash girl ! — was willing, nay, eager for it in the beginning.”

The Palace of Monplaisir

“And you think she — she — changed?”

Berwick looked down at Roger, who was not so tall as he.

“Yes, — so much, that I was afraid she would turn back on the journey. I had not then seen this Prince, an I tried to warn Mademoiselle d’Orantia that she had gone too far to retreat. God forgive me if I advised her ill. But I shall not leave this white dove quite unprotected amid the vultures. I have full power from His Majesty, and not a stiver does this scoundrel Prince get, unless his wife is willing to live with him. The day Orlamunde becomes intolerable to her, that day does the Prince cease to receive the two hundred thousand livres which we pay, together with this unfortunate girl, for Mondberg and Arnheim. This I shall make plain before I leave this cursed place.”

At night the fireworks were very splendid. Roger, standing on a balcony near Michelle, tried to watch her, but Countess von Roda claimed his attention. She liked the looks of this clean-limbed, bright-eyed young man better than the tall and silent Berwick — she had already found out his name — the Pike. But she thought Monsieur d’Egremont, as she called him, rather a sulky fellow. Not only Roger’s name became French, but everything at Orlamunde was more French than at Paris. The court people uttered not a word of any other language but French, which they spoke with a fearful accent. Following the fireworks was a concert, in which the songs were all French, and the fiddles fiddled only French airs. Michelle went through it all with the same smiling courage she had shown from the beginning. It was midnight before all was over. The marriage was to take place next day at noon.

Roger Egremont went to his room, to rest and to

The House of Egremont

When they had passed out of the town and had crossed the bridge over the laughing river they stopped and looked back at Orlamunde lying placid in the spring sunshine. Bare-legged girls were beating linen and laughing on the banks of the river; the old schloss rose dark and threatening, as if terrorizing the merry little town. A sentry upon a lookout tower walked his narrow beat, his cuirass glistening afar. The beautiful roofs and pinnacles of Monplaisir shone above the delicate green of its gardens and parks. Within that fair palace was Michelle. Roger Egremont's heart was like lead in his bosom when he thought of her. She was destined to misery, but, however her heart might be tortured, he felt sure her soul would remain free. She would walk like Una, unafraid and unashamed. He remembered what she had said about not counting on her strength — that she was no better than he — and he inwardly contradicted her. She was as pure and as unapproachable as a star; for Roger Egremont knew so little of the human heart that he esteemed the highest form of virtue to be that which knows no temptation.

CHAPTER XIV

ROGER EGREMONT HAS A LITTLE ADVENTURE IN A GARDEN AT NEERWINDEN AND BECOMES A MAJOR IN THE FINEST BRIGADE IN THE WORLD.

A WARM July night in 1693 — a full moon illuminating a flat, wooded country, with cottages and hamlets flecking the meadows, and villages nestling upon the slight ascents. It is a prosperous-seeming country and well peopled at all times. Now it is like a beehive, with something like eighty thousand men moving over it, and sixty thousand are preparing to contest their way, when they shall have reached a pretty spot, on the prettiest little river in the Low Countries — Landen. It will run with blood to-morrow.

It is almost midnight, the hour when the peasants usually are snoring hard after their day's work. But on this hot July night no one sleeps, although the windows of the houses are kept dark; the people do not care to reveal to the soldiers the nearness of a house.

The movement is remarkably quiet for such vast numbers of men. The cavalry have clanked and thundered on ahead; the artillery can still be heard lumbering heavily in the advance, but the roads are good, and the flat country makes few echoes. Along the high road, march steadily many regiments of infantry. It is easy marching, but they have been at it for long hours. The soldiers of the French army were allowed

The House of Egremont

to sing and joke — nay, even to dance — on the march, when there was likely to be fighting at the end of it. But the time for this was past. They could not reach their bivouac before one in the morning, at least, and their minds were on — what think you? Whether they would know the secrets of the other world before another moon should rise? Not at all. It was how much time would they be allowed to sleep before the beat of the drum next morning, and whether their share of those vast quantities of bread which had been baked that week would come up in time.

Lieutenant-General the Duke of Berwick, tired of riding, had dismounted for a few minutes, and leading his horse, walked by the side of an officer, also dismounted and leading his horse. They were among friends and comrades; the marching troops were that celebrated Irish Brigade, which held Irish, English, and Scotch in its ranks, and always gave its enemies trouble when encountered.

Captain Roger Egremont was the other dismounted officer, and he was saying, —

“It wrings my heart to think that to-morrow we shall give many of our own countrymen a mortal breakfast.”

“True enough, and I feel for the humble soldiers, misguided by those who should show them the right. For the officers, men who fight for a usurper, death should be their portion,” replied Berwick. “I hope we shall not be caught napping, as we were at Steinkerque. Do you know, it is the fashion at Paris now, to dress à la Steinkerque — cravats hanging loose, coats half-buttoned, perukes awry.”

“I went into that fight with nothing on but my breeches and shirt. I had a hat, but I lost it in the

Roger has a Little Adventure

mêlée, and my shirt was torn straight across the back, and a private soldier stripped a dead man of a coat to cover my nakedness," said Roger Egremont; on the day of Steinkerque he had won his captaincy.

Berwick, who had a voice in singing like the croak of a frog with the quinsy, began to hum below his breath Captain Ogilvie's song, —

"The soldier returns from the wars,
The sailor recrosses the sea,
But I — I return no more, my dear,
I return no more."

"I don't know what brought that song to mind — I have not thought of it since we made that famous journey to Orlamunde, when you sang it to us sometimes — always prefacing, 'You should have heard my cousin Richard sing.' I would like to hear something from that unfortunate Princess."

"I should like to hear that her villain of a husband was dead — or that she was."

It was the first time Berwick had heard Roger Egremont mention Michelle since the April morning that they had left Monplaisir behind them. Neither said anything more; and presently Berwick, remounting, rode off. Roger continued to trudge by the side of his men.

It was for him as if no more women existed in the world. He made a firm resolve, and held to it surprisingly well, to think as little on Michelle as possible. Any other way, madness lay. It was as if all his illusions had been shattered at once. He saw himself as he truly was, — not a gentleman of fortune, temporarily out of his estate, but as a gentleman adventurer, most unlikely ever to have an estate. He secretly despaired

The House of Egremont

of the restoration of the King, although keeping a bold front. He went his way, calm, not very smiling, but quite unruffled; did his duty as a soldier, and wondered why God should treat him so ill. For you will have known by this time that Roger Egremont was a very human man, and had all the common faults of humanity. One thing he noted with sorrow; he had grown indifferent to life. What mattered it, a few years more or less? He was reckoned extraordinarily brave, and his coolness in danger was remarkable where all men were cool in danger. But, in truth, Roger Egremont had no special objection to quitting a world where he had got more kicks than ha'pence, so far.

He had written several times to Bess Lukens, and had got two laboriously written letters from her. They were fairly well spelled, — as well as those written by some of the ladies of the court, both at St. Germain and Versailles, and had evidently been copied from a rough draft. Bess was well and happy.

“Last Sunday [she wrote] Papa Mazet took me to sing in the apartments of Madame Maintenon, before the French King. The poor man was near wild. [Roger took this to refer to Papa Mazet, and not the French King.] The King was extreamely pleased, and said I should hear his twenty-four violins which played while he ate his dinner, and I did. There was a French lady there who also sang. She screached mighty loud, but did not seem to mind her notes much. Mr. Richard is now studying at Paris. He comes to see me on the one day in the month when he is let out. He and I are the best of friends. Papa Mazet heard that the Superior, as Mr. Richard calls him, had been axing about my character, knowing that Mr. Richard came to see me. I warrant you, Papa Mazet sent the Superior a message that put, not a flea, but a wasp, in his ear. I see the old

Roger has a Little Adventure

lady, Madame Beaumanoir, a week ago, when I went out to see Madame Michot and spend Sunday with her. The old lady stopped me on the terrace, spoke me mighty fair, and said if I ever wanted help, to come to her. I thanked her, and axed her about you, and told her Mr. Richard was now living in Paris. She praised him monstrous high, but no more than he deserved, even if he is going to be a popish priest and talk Latin all the time, as I hear the popishers mostly do. They say the old lady did not stay at Orlamunde a whole month, and when she got back her friends had been near driven to chain her up, to keep her from going to Marly-le-Roi and telling King Louis a bushel of things he did not want to know. Pray let me hear good news from you, my dear, kind Mr. Roger. From your faithful, loving friend,

BESS LUKENS.

N. B. — I write my name in general like you showed me — Elisa Luccheni."

Roger had letters from Dicky as often as there was a good opportunity from Paris. Dicky told him the news from England and from St. Germain : —

"I go to see that honest creature, Bess Lukens, when I can. She sings to my violin, and we talk about what we shall do when we go back to England ; not that I think she yearns to go as much as the rest of us. She says she has no one she cares about in England."

And then Dicky told him the same story about Madame de Beaumanoir's return.

Roger Egremont was indulging himself in thinking of these things as he tramped along, still leading his tired horse. Mile after mile was passed ; before him an endless black line of marching men, an endless black line behind him. As the clock tolled one in a village steeple the order to halt came. The bivouac was in open field,

The House of Egremont

and in half an hour the men had eaten such provision as was made for them, and rolled in their blankets were sleeping soundly. So slept Roger Egremont. One of the compensations of the soldier's life was that he could always eat soldier's fare with a relish, and slept like an infant. He remembered those sleepless nights in Newgate, and was thankful he was spared that horror.

At four o'clock in the morning he was up and shaving — for he had privately promised himself never to be caught again as at Steinkerque — and he put a fresh white cockade in his hat. At half-past four, when the men were munching their breakfasts, and the soft, sweet dawn of a July morning overspread the land, Roger caught sight of a brilliant group of general officers riding along that silvery brook of Landen, which was to be of a dreadful color before night. He recognized the commanding-general, — that gay, ugly, dissolute, brave old Maréchal de Luxembourg, — who sent so many standards to Paris that he was called "*le tapissier de Notre Dame* ;" who, when he heard that William of Orange had spoken of him coarsely, as "that old hunch-back," retorted by saying, "What does he know about it? he never saw my back ;" and who ended his merry old life so piously and composedly that the stern and scrupulous Père Bourdaloue said: "I should not wish to live like the Maréchal de Luxembourg, but I should wish to die like him."

And then the sound of fife and drum and bugle rent the blue air ; great bodies of men assumed form and shape and motion, and the Irish brigade, led by Lieutenant-General the Duke of Berwick, plunged into the crystal stream, and rushed over woods and fields and briery thickets, toward the village of Neerwinden, — rushed, as they ever did, to glory or the grave.

Roger has a Little Adventure

The Irish brigade wore red coats, by order of their King, James Stuart, and they longed to be at arm's-length with other grim red-coats, who filled the trenches that encompassed the village, swarmed in the houses and gardens, and whose cannon bristled on every coign of vantage. These red-coats owned William of Orange for their King. They had Germans, many thousands of them, on their side; but the men of the Irish brigade counted themselves cheated and swindled and chicaned when they had only to fight the Germans and the Dutch. And there were Frenchmen fighting in line with the Irish brigade. But those Whig red-coats reckoned not with them; they were not the Irish brigade. So those fellow-countrymen rushed together with the greatest longing, saying in their hearts, "My brother, how art thou?" and then stabbing that brother if the brother did not succeed in stabbing first.

On one side of these eager men who followed Berwick as he showed them the way toward their enemies, was the brigade of Rubantel, on the other that of Montchevreuil, — French, both, — but the centre brigade never saw them after the brook was crossed. Up the wooded incline rushed the Irish brigade and the foot-guards; through brake and thicket they dashed, the tall figure of the Duke of Berwick on his powerful bay charger ever in the van. On they plunge to Neerwinden, but in their impetuous charge they have far outstripped their supports on the right and the left. Roger Egremont, on foot, at the head of his company, tumbling out a squad of gunners from a trench, turned to see a blazing line of red-coats falling upon the Irish brigade on all sides. Rubantel and Montchevreuil are not in sight, but a thunder of guns, and a ceaseless rattle and crash of musketry, off amid the woods and ravines that

The House of Egremont

lie between the river and the village, show where they are. They have been stopped for a time by great masses of English, Dutch, and Germans, — horse, foot, and artillery, — but are holding their own so stubbornly that Dutch William says, between his clenched teeth, —

“This insolent nation !”

And that merry old hunchbacked warrior, the Maréchal de Luxembourg, who has always beaten William of Orange whenever they have been matched, sits perched on his horse, watching the struggle from a hill, and holding in his hand ten regiments of horse ready to support “the insolent nation” when they really want it.

But meanwhile the English are closing in upon Berwick’s incomparable brigade. Roger sees, just before him, a little walled-in garden on the outskirts of the village, with a stout oaken door at the back. He reforms his men, and making a rush for the garden, a soldier climbs nimbly over the wall, unbars the gate, and Roger and his men scamper in, just in time to lock and bar the gate behind them. The wall is high and spiked, and opposite the oaken door is an open iron-work gate looking on to the street, where can be seen men fighting furiously, English and French in confusion, riderless horses plunging, and no one clearly understanding what has happened, or what he has to do, only to fight, to fight, to fight.

Roger Egremont, wiping the blood from his sword, glances about him, prepared to defend himself at the first assault made upon him, which will be in half a minute. The iron gate is secured like the oaken door, and sharpshooters are posted there, with their muskets carefully adjusted at the openings in the grille. But every man in the company of Egremont is a sharpshooter for that time. And in the middle of the mossy

Roger has a Little Adventure

garden is a charming little summer-house, covered with rich red roses in full bloom. They will be redder next year, for they will be watered with blood.

"My lads," cries Roger, "we are safe as in a fortress here; we may sit down and laugh, for all the harm those rascal Whigs can do us. See, we have a summer-house to lie down and rest ourselves in when we get tired of picking 'em off through the gate and over the top of the wall. See, yonder high house, without a loophole in the wall, protects us on that side. We sha'n't see any more fun to-day, I am fearing;" of which speech part was true and part was a lie, — they being in very imminent danger every moment. Nevertheless, the men, some of whom were from Devonshire, huzzaed loudly.

The huzza was interrupted by a yell from the outside, and the long rolling of the English drums. A torrent of red-coats poured into the narrow street, moving steadily forward like fate. Roger at the same moment saw Berwick, on his great bay horse, appear as if out of the ground, and at the same moment with a shout the English soldiers recognized him. Roger saw him tear the white cockade from his hat, dig the spurs into his horse, and leaping a low wall in his path, make off at full speed.

"He is safe, at all events," cried Roger. This, too, was a lie, for he caught a perfect view of Berwick, as dashing on, he rode straight into the arms of his uncle, Brigadier Churchill, was unhorsed, tall man and tall horse going down together, and when they rose, Berwick was winded and staggering, and the uncle held the nephew by the collar — all of which Roger saw.

Meanwhile, the red-coats in the garden have their hands full. They are plainly seen through the grille,

The House of Egremont

and the English foot-soldiers try every means to dislodge them. The Whigs try climbing the wall — their opponents within the garden shouting to them menacingly, —

“Come on, ye toads, and have at ye!”

And then pitching the wounded back to be trampled upon by others, the red-coats rush at the iron gate and try to tear it down; but they only leave a rampart of their bodies still further to protect those inside. The battle rages all around them, — in the village, in the fields behind, in the plain beyond, — but the company of Egremont is besieged in the walled garden. There is no artillery at hand to dislodge them; it is man to man, fusil to fusil, countryman to countryman, the scarlet coat to the scarlet coat. It is hard work, but the men complain of nothing but want of drink.

“Never mind, my lads,” says Roger, smiling, “the other fellows are as thirsty as we, and they are not so comfortable as we, safe in a pleasant garden on this broiling day, with a cool summer-house to rest in when we are tired; nor as easy in their minds, for we live or die as becomes honest men.”

Hours pass, the roar of battle never ceasing, and the steady thunder of eighty great guns concentrated upon the French centre knowing no pause or rest. The company of Egremont had been holding its own since eight o'clock in the morning. The tide has surged back and forth, but never has it receded far enough to let them escape, or advanced near enough to overwhelm them. Some poor fellows lie stark on the mossy ground; a dozen wounded men are stretched in the little summer-house, — they want nothing but victory and water.

Roger Egremont, with a great gash over his forehead,

Roger has a Little Adventure

his head tied up in a handkerchief, with his white cockade pinned to it, has borrowed a fusil from a soldier and is taking a shot through the iron gate at the men struggling in the village street. His red coat is torn open, — it is cruelly hot, and he has worked hard since daylight, — and his white shirt has some blood-stains on it. Opposite is a tall stone house for which both sides have fought desperately, the French being in possession. Suddenly, through the uproar comes the sharp blare of a fife playing “*Les Folies en Espagne.*”

“That’s a French tune, my lads,” shouts Roger; and then comes a rush of white cockades and the splendid uniforms, now bedraggled, of the household troops of Louis le Grand; and presently that frightful thunder of the English, Dutch, and German batteries which had never ceased its dreadful clangor since noon, began to falter, and when at last the iron gate was opened and the company of Egremont marched out in good order with their bayonets screwed into their muskets, and found the other scarlet coats retreating grimly, and in a manner not to be hurried, the field of Neerwinden was won. The *Maréchal de Luxembourg* had seen the back of William of Orange that day, but had not shown his own.

Terrible were the losses of the Irish brigade, and Berwick was a prisoner. It was known that after the battle he had marched with the English foot as far as Sichen, being treated with great affection by his uncle, the Brigadier Churchill, who declared to him that his other uncle, the Duke of Marlborough, took much pride in so promising a nephew. Nor were the Whig red-coats a whit behind in respect for so gallant an enemy. Nevertheless, as soon as he fell into the hands of his half sister’s husband, William of Orange, it was given

The House of Egremont

out that he was to be shut up in the Tower of London, and tried as a prisoner of state, instead of being paroled as a prisoner of war—and that meant a trip to Tyburn, with the block and the headsman awaiting him. The news was very disquieting to the whole French nation, and infuriating to the great brigade which felt itself honored in having had him for a commander. The Maréchal de Luxembourg, however, bade everybody to be easy about Lieutenant-General the Duke of Berwick. The Maréchal held the winning card. Among the prisoners taken by him was the Duke of Ormond. Whatever befell one Duke should befall the other. This intimation, when conveyed in due time to William of Orange, acted like a charm. Berwick was paroled within a week.

It was now August. The Maréchal de Luxembourg had fixed his headquarters at the gay little town of Nivelle, which was the gayer for that reason, and at Nivelle Berwick reported himself.

On the evening of his arrival he sought out Roger Egremont. Roger was found, sitting in his tent, studying maps by the light of a candle stuck in a bottle. He was delighted to see Berwick again.

"I had meant to go to see you as soon as the high mightinesses were disposed of," cried Roger, as they gripped each other's hands.

"I have seen other high mightinesses," said Berwick. "I have seen my half-sister's husband, the Prince of Orange. I will say of him that although I shall have no cause to bless his memory, I cannot deny him the faculties of a great man, nor, if he were not a usurper, of a great king. Our encounter after Neerwinden was not unlike the one you had at Egremont. The Prince, when I was presented to him, paid me a long

Roger has a Little Adventure

compliment. This I returned by a low bow. He then regarded me steadfastly for a space. I looked him in the eye. He put on his hat. I put on mine. The interview ended."

Roger laughed very heartily at this—he still had some laughter left in him. It is only your mean-spirited rascal who cannot laugh. God leaves laughter and tears as a solace to the honest people.

War, in those days, was full of gallantry, and the gay old Maréchal de Luxembourg was never without the presence of ladies at his headquarters, except when he was actually burning powder; and the ladies of the neighboring towns and châteaux had reason to remember the merry old gentleman gratefully. While he was doing all he could to send their husbands, fathers, and brothers into another world, he was eager to make this one pleasant to these fair ones. Some stern moralists, Berwick among them, rather complained of the Maréchal's habit of turning his camp into a resort for the ladies.

Nivelle, during those August days, was certainly gay enough. Roger Egremont heard much of it, and saw many pretty women fluttering about, in coaches, on horseback, on pillions; but women no longer interested him. He had begun to study very seriously the great game of war, and had little thought for anything else. He did not even read as ravenously as he once had done, and one night, passing an abandoned campfire, he threw into it his little volume of Ronsard's poems. He did it deliberately; he had tried once or twice before to burn the little book up, but his resolution had failed him at the last moment. The book, however, nestling close to his breast, spoke always of Michelle; it called her name softly to him, in the quiet moments

The House of Egremont

of the restoration of the King, although keeping a bold front. He went his way, calm, not very smiling, but quite unruffled; did his duty as a soldier, and wondered why God should treat him so ill. For you will have known by this time that Roger Egremont was a very human man, and had all the common faults of humanity. One thing he noted with sorrow; he had grown indifferent to life. What mattered it, a few years more or less? He was reckoned extraordinarily brave, and his coolness in danger was remarkable where all men were cool in danger. But, in truth, Roger Egremont had no special objection to quitting a world where he had got more kicks than ha'pence, so far.

He had written several times to Bess Lukens, and had got two laboriously written letters from her. They were fairly well spelled, — as well as those written by some of the ladies of the court, both at St. Germain's and Versailles, and had evidently been copied from a rough draft. Bess was well and happy.

“Last Sunday [she wrote] Papa Mazet took me to sing in the apartments of Madame Maintenon, before the French King. The poor man was near wild. [Roger took this to refer to Papa Mazet, and not the French King.] The King was extreamely pleased, and said I should hear his twenty-four violins which played while he ate his dinner, and I did. There was a French lady there who also sang. She screamed mighty loud, but did not seem to mind her notes much. Mr. Richard is now studying at Paris. He comes to see me on the one day in the month when he is let out. He and I are the best of friends. Papa Mazet heard that the Superior, as Mr. Richard calls him, had been axing about my character, knowing that Mr. Richard came to see me. I warrant you, Papa Mazet sent the Superior a message *that* put, not a flea, but a wasp, in his ear. I see the old

Roger has a Little Adventure

lady, Madame Beaumanoir, a week ago, when I went out to see Madame Michot and spend Sunday with her. The old lady stopped me on the terrace, spoke me mighty fair, and said if I ever wanted help, to come to her. I thanked her, and axed her about you, and told her Mr. Richard was now living in Paris. She praised him monstrous high, but no more than he deserved, even if he is going to be a popish priest and talk Latin all the time, as I hear the popishers mostly do. They say the old lady did not stay at Orlamunde a whole month, and when she got back her friends had been near driven to chain her up, to keep her from going to Marly-le-Roi and telling King Louis a bushel of things he did not want to know. Pray let me hear good news from you, my dear, kind Mr. Roger. From your faithful, loving friend,

BESS LUKENS.

N. B. — I write my name in general like you showed me — Elisa Luccheni."

Roger had letters from Dicky as often as there was a good opportunity from Paris. Dicky told him the news from England and from St. Germain: —

"I go to see that honest creature, Bess Lukens, when I can. She sings to my violin, and we talk about what we shall do when we go back to England; not that I think she yearns to go as much as the rest of us. She says she has no one she cares about in England."

And then Dicky told him the same story about Madame de Beaumanoir's return.

Roger Egremont was indulging himself in thinking of these things as he tramped along, still leading his tired horse. Mile after mile was passed; before him an endless black line of marching men, an endless black line behind him. As the clock tolled one in a village steeple the order to halt came. The bivouac was in open field,

The House of Egremont

"Yes; I am now Major Egremont. One or two more campaigns, and I shall be a lieutenant-colonel."

"And have you seen Mr. Dicky?"

"Not yet. I am but just come. I slept last night at Verneuil."

"You should see him — a personable lad. And why should I call him a lad? he is every day of three-and-twenty, and will soon be ordained a popish priest. He has it in his head to go back to England, and you ought to dissuade him; indeed you should, Roger, because you know that means death."

"Not I, Bess. My cousin Dicky is a man, and to dissuade a man from his duty because he may have to die for it, is no way of mine."

Bess remained silent — she had no true idea of *noblesse oblige*. Poor Bess was not a lady, — the blood of the Lukens family did not run in the channels of the Egremonts. She thought Roger a little hard-hearted.

"Anyway," she cried aggressively, "he is far too good for a popish priest, and a great deal too handsome."

"Take care, my dear," responded Roger, laughing, "I may yet be a popish priest myself. Remember Monsieur La Trappe, who was a soldier."

"There's no danger for *you*," coolly said Bess. And then they were at the inn door, and Madame Michot came forth, bustling, to meet them; and lame Jacques, who admired Bess as a star far above him, limped forward, and they were all very glad to see each other once more.

Madame Michot could give Roger his old garret for a month. As for the inn itself, it was like its old self only in the winter, when some of the former patrons came back. Some of them would never come back, but slept in Flemish ground, or their bones were bleach-

Roger has a Little Adventure

ing in the passes of the Spanish mountains, or they whitened the plains of Italy, or they took their rest on the banks of the Rhine.

The common room, however, was decently full that evening when Roger ordered his supper. Many of those present he had served with. They had talk of campaigns, past and future, good news from England, where the recent death of Mary of Orange had seriously weakened her husband's position. The Duke of Berwick was at St. Germain for the winter, where it was reported that he sought favor in the lovely eyes of Honora de Burgh, widow of the brave Sarsfield, killed at Neerwinden, and daughter of Lord Clanricarde. He was in high favor at Marly-le-Roi, and was one of the twenty great nobles whom the Dauphin invited to Choisy to plant trees, to hunt, and to enjoy life as great nobles should. The little Prince of Wales charmed everybody. When he met a private soldier, he always pulled out his little purse and gave what he had in it, "to drink the health of the King, my father." And the little Princess Louisa, "*La Consolatrice*," as her fond father called her, was then nearly three years old, and was an angel. William and Mary had no children; all of the Princess Anne's were dead or dying, so the exiles told each other, believing the hand of God to be upon Goneril and Regan, while the Queen whom those daughters had displaced had two beautiful infants, so lovely that the greatest queen and empress in the world might envy her those cherubs. This was the talk Roger Egremont heard that night in the common room, — most of it highly agreeable to him. After the usual nightcap of punch and the King's health had been drunk, and the house was quiet for the night, Roger looked out of the window he knew so well, down upon that familiar

The House of Egremont

scene. A bright December moon illuminated the glorious terrace, the black pile of the old château, the river flowing icy cold through the wintry meadows. It was all very sad to him, — the place was haunted. He wished he had remained at winter quarters in Brabant.

Next day was Sunday, and he went to mass in the chapel. He saw the King, broken and aged, but a King still, enter; the Queen, a queen always; and the two tiny children, the little Prince of Wales gravely leading "La Consolatrice" by the hand. Roger's heart swelled when he saw these two infants — they were so beautiful.

The organ pealed out, and voices rose in the anthem. Roger tried to keep his mind fixed on holy things, but he easily distinguished, above the golden tones of the organ and the melody of the other voices, Bess Lukens's glorious soprano. It was one of those rich and radiant voices, full of color and religious passion. One knew that the singer was young and glowing with life and fire. Roger glanced upward at her. She was standing up to sing, her hood and mantle thrown back. He saw in her face that great and beautiful change which was taking place in her. She was singing, "I have loved righteousness and hated iniquity." It was true; and because she had honestly hated iniquity she had passed through it unscathed, and had come from the continual sight of it in a common gaol, to a life of innocence and peace, among honest people like herself.

After mass, Roger attended the King's levee. It was very full, for the chances of James's restoration seemed brilliant. The little town was crowded, and what gave great joy to Roger Egremont was that they were chiefly new faces, — persons who thought they saw the rising, *once more*, of the Jacobite star. Already human na-

Roger has a Little Adventure

ture was asserting itself at St. Germain in quarrels over the coming flesh-pots. Lord Middleton led a party called the Compounders, who wanted a general amnesty; while Lord Melfort led the non-Compounders, who proposed to distribute punishments as well as rewards. The King, with whom Mary of Orange had once been a favorite child, whose impenitent death distressed him greatly, yet sternly refused to have his shabby court wear mourning for her, or to take any outward notice of the death of this despoiler of her father and brother. The King, however, prayed long and often for the soul of his undutiful child.

The château, like all the rest of St. Germain, was haunted to Roger Egremont. He sincerely hoped he should not meet Madame de Beaumanoir that day, and looked about him anxiously on entering the grand saloon. To his relief, she was not there.

In his turn, he made his obeisance to the King and Queen, sitting, not in state, but as the father and mother of a large family. The King greeted him kindly.

"I hear you have earned promotion, Mr. Egremont."

"Thanks, your Majesty, to the good offices of the Duke of Berwick, who sees to it that no man, however humble, goes without his reward," replied Roger. The ablest courtier in the world could not have turned a speech better to please the King's ear, or the Queen's either for that matter, as she looked chiefly to the half-brother of her child, for that child's restoration to his father's throne.

"I should like to see you privately to-morrow morning, that I may know particularly of all my former gentlemen-at-arms," said the poor King.

Then the queen spoke — her sweet and thrilling

The House of Egremont

voice, with her beautiful black eyes, being her great charm. "The Duke of Berwick has told us much of you, Mr. Egremont. I hope that you will never go so far away from us that we cannot get you on short notice."

"I hope so, too, your Majesty; and when your Majesties are returned to England, no one will be a more assiduous courtier than myself."

Then the little Prince of Wales, walking up fearlessly, without asking permission of his governor, Lord Middleton, twisted his little hand in Roger's sword-belt, and said, "I know your name. It is Roger Egremont, for the Duke of Berwick told me a story about your fighting for the King, my father, in a garden. Tell me all about it now."

"If your Royal Highness's governor will permit," replied Roger, gravely; and Lord Middleton nodding his head, the little fellow led Roger off to a window-seat, and planting himself between his new friend's knees, asked all about the battle of Neerwinden, and showed so much intelligence for a little lad that Roger was charmed.

When the levee was dismissed and Roger was rising to go, there passed before him a vision of delicate loveliness which waked him for a moment from that indifference to women which had long possessed him. It was Honora de Burgh, her widow's robe showing off her pure complexion, her eyes so wonderfully bright and clear; they reminded him of another pair of eyes he had often seen at St. Germain's, and never without a thrill. Some one whispered the name of the Irish beauty, and Roger knew it was the woman that Berwick was said to admire so profoundly. Roger looked at her more attentively still. He noticed that she seemed but a

Roger has a Little Adventure

frail flower, — the color on her cheek, the light in her eyes was too vivid; the painful thought suddenly occurred to him that she was not destined to outlive her youth. Sad, sad, prescience!

The town was so full of English, Irish, and Scotch that Roger could not pass along the narrow streets without running into his own country people. All were sanguine of being in their native land within three months. William of Orange had not been a kind or a faithful husband, but yet he grieved much at the death of his wife, and his health was said to be breaking. He was credited at St. Germain's with having twenty different diseases, each certain of a fatal ending in a short space of time — the wish being father to the thought.

Roger, after meeting and greeting many acquaintances and friends, returned to the inn. He much desired to see Dicky, and also Berwick. Judging from what he had heard concerning Sarsfield's beautiful young widow, he had but little doubt that St. Germain's was the place to seek Berwick, and not all the blandishments of the French King and Monseigneur combined could keep him long away. But Dicky must be sought in Paris. Bess Lukens, he found, was to return that afternoon, and so he determined to go in the stage-coach with her, — a huge, rumbling vehicle which ran daily at that time between St. Germain's and Paris.

At five o'clock they were to start. It was a dull winter afternoon, and the journey promised to be cold and disagreeable. But Roger was glad to get away from St. Germain's, and delighted at the prospect of seeing Dicky. He walked with Bess to the street corner where they were to meet the stage. He noticed,

The House of Egremont

as he had done every moment since he had seen her, how great was her improvement in language, in manners, in all externals. But she was the same Bess after all, — warm-hearted, generous, full of courage and quite capable of vindictiveness. A gallant on the seat beside her venturing some impertinent glances at her, Bess turned, coolly surveyed him, and then remarked out aloud, as if talking to herself,

“Of all the monkeys I ever saw, this is the worst. The very dogs in Paris will bark at us if we carry him all the way.”

And this gay gentleman, like others, began by admiring Bess's blooming beauty, and ended by cursing her saucy tongue.

It was long after dark before they rolled into Paris, and Roger escorted Bess to her own door. The Mazets were delighted to see him, and nothing would do but he must stay to supper. As soon as he accepted their invitation, Bess disappeared into the kitchen. While Papa Mazet was telling with pride of the triumphs of his pet pupil, and his battles on her account with the Abbé d'Albret, who now had charge of the King's Opera, the song-bird was standing over the *batterie de cuisine* in the kitchen, preparing a delicious supper, which she presently served with her own hands. After it was over, and it was time for Roger to seek a lodging, he rose to go, thanking Papa Mazet and the old sister for their kindness to his friend. Bess went with him to the door, and held a candle in her hand to light him down the dark street. He heard her sweet, clear voice calling after him, “Good-night, Mr. Roger, and good sleep to you!”

Next day, at an appointed hour, he went to see Dicky at the seminary. They hugged each other as they had

Roger has a Little Adventure

done when they were boys, and then spent the afternoon together in the garden of the monastery, — a quaint old place, shut off and screened, in perfect solitude, although in the heart of the great city.

It amazed Roger that Dicky should have changed so little. He seemed exactly like the apple-cheeked boy he had loved and patronized and bullied and hectorred over at Egremont in those days, so long, long past. Yet, as Bess Lukens said, Dicky was all of three and twenty, and that he was no longer a boy was proved by what he told Roger.

“You must know, Roger,” he said, “that the Superior may let me be ordained before my ten years of study are over. In truth, old boy, I think the Superior knows that I shall never be as learned as most of the men in the Society of Jesus, and that I shall never be more than respectable at books. It is action that will suit me best. And there have come to us many letters and messages from our scattered flocks in England, praying for priests to come to them; and in the present persecution it is useless for any of the Society to go there except an Englishman who can maintain his disguise. So I have urgently prayed the Superior to let me be ordained and go to my native country. I think my precious fiddle will supply me with a disguise. Think, Roger, how delightful it must be to walk through green England, doing one’s duty, and taking one’s pleasure in the fresh fields and the pleasant country lanes, and basking in God’s sun all the while.”

“And playing the fiddle,” assented Roger. “Dick, man, I will not dissuade you. If ’t is your duty to go, it shall not be said that I, the head of our house — such a poor, broken house it is! — shall keep you back. No more would you keep me back from leading the forlorn

The House of Egremont

hope, if I were accorded that honor. You stand a good chance of escape—for not eight years' residence in France has altered the Devonshire tongue of you."

"And the poor people about Egremont, most of them, are non-jurors anyway, and much as many of them hate my religion, they love the name of Egremont too well to betray me. So if you hear of me going to England, be not too anxious about me. I have a thousand chances of escape."

Then Dicky had a whole batch of news about Egremont, to which Roger listened thirstily. Hugo Stein was in high favor with the Whig government, who found his knowledge of languages useful in matters requiring a trusty agent on the continent. He was now known as Sir Hugo Egremont, William of Orange having made him a baronet on the last royal birthday. He was much on the seas, between England and the continent. Possibly he did not find England a very agreeable residence; he was in no great favor in Devonshire. The estate did not suffer by these absences. Hugo was as thrifty as any Flemish weaver, and was always increasing his store. He had added several hundred acres of land to Egremont, but, wishing to dispose of some which was of the original estate but not in the entail, he had been infuriated to find that he was not considered competent to make a title. True, the gentleman, who had been very anxious to buy this same land in Roger's time, was a Jacobite, and as such, might very well doubt the legality of the bestowal of estates which William of Orange so liberally indulged in, yet his reasons were plausible. The "parliament men," as William of Orange angrily called them, were perpetually meddling with these grants of estates, and some very prudent Whigs were not satisfied with such titles as the new in-

Roger has a Little Adventure

cumbents could give. Sir Hugo had made desperate efforts after this to sell this land, at any sort of a price, — rightly considering that his whole estate was in jeopardy, if he could not alienate an acre, — but he had been totally unsuccessful, and was furiously chagrined thereby.

All this delighted Roger beyond measure, and he indulged himself in calling his half-brother a thief, rogue, rascal, scoundrel, liar, and traitor, and enjoyed it very much.

Then he had to tell Dicky in detail all he had done and seen and heard since last they met, although Dicky had had a pretty full account of it in Roger's letters.

The short winter afternoon was closing when they parted. Roger's spirit was always calmed and cheered by Dicky. Here was indeed a single-minded man, — a man who craved not riches, nor glory, nor slothful ease, but who earnestly desired to help his fellow-creatures; a man free from vanity, — Dicky Egremont modestly and humbly owned that he was not a man of books in an order where learning was held in vast esteem, — and who, knowing his own limitations, was the stronger thereby. When Dicky Egremont became Father Egremont, so Roger thought, he would never be a great teacher in the schools of Louvain and Clermont, or St. Omer's, or Paris, but he would be found ever with the poor and the ignorant and the timid. He was so devoid of fear that he always had his wits about him, so Roger remembered, and therefore, great as would be his danger in venturing into England, yet he would have every chance for his life which coolness and resource could give.

On the Monday Roger returned to St. Germain's. Berwick had come from Choisy, where he had been in

The House of Egremont

attendance on Monseigneur, and had already been twice to the inn of Michot to see him. As soon as Roger had seen Merrylegs, who was leading the life of a gentleman in the inn stables, he set off for the château, by way of the terrace. It was quite full of people, and he was stopped every few steps to speak to some one. Presently he saw the Queen approaching with several ladies and gentlemen in attendance. He recognized at once Honora de Burgh, in her black hood and gown, looking as fragile and beautiful as an anemone. And by her side was the tall figure of Berwick—the Pike, he was still called. Roger was passing the Queen with a low reverence, when she stopped him and spoke graciously; and then Berwick, grasping his hand, introduced him to Sarsfield's beautiful young widow.

"The Duke of Berwick has told me much of you, Major Egremont," she said,—and her voice was exquisitely sweet, but something in that voice, those eyes which smiled as did her lips, had a foreboding; she looked, as indeed she was, too frail for earth.

She was most gracious to Roger then, and in the evening at the palace. And that night, when Berwick went back with Roger to the inn, the story came out; Berwick, blushing like a girl, told that he was to marry the beautiful young widow in the spring. And he did not, as men commonly do, ask Roger when he meant to do likewise; he had great knowledge of the human heart; he knew that Roger Egremont had once loved, and his love had proved unfortunate. Roger grasped Berwick's hand, and wished him joy from the very bottom of a faithful heart, and said, with truth, that any man might love that sweet and gracious and lovely flower of a woman, Madame Sarsfield. Berwick asked Roger his plans, and in reply got that Roger had a

Roger has a Little Adventure

month's leave, but thought he would rejoin his regiment in Brabant long before it was out. He had paid his duty to the King; he had seen the only three persons in the world who cared to see him, — his cousin Richard Egremont, his old friend Bess Lukens, and Berwick himself. As for his cousins of the Sandhills, he sincerely hoped he would never clap eyes on any one of them again, — either the gambling, dissolute Edward or the sanctimonious Anthony. As for Madame de Beaumanoir, — at this he halted; the old lady had been so uniformly friendly to him that he felt an ingrate in saying he did not wish to see her, and was glad to hear she was not at St. Germain.

"Tut, man," cried Berwick with the enthusiasm of a man in love, "you have vapors, like women. You will be asking for an extension of leave within two more days! — that I warrant."

Nevertheless, before the end of the week, Roger, on Merrylegs, was trotting soberly back to Brabant. He reckoned himself fortunate in one way. No one had mentioned to him the name of the Princess of Orlamunde. He was as certain that she was a miserable woman as he was that he himself was a living man; but he could not bear to have her misery spoken of to him.

CHAPTER XV

IN WHICH AN EGREMONT HAS THE HAPPINESS OF
RETURNING TO HIS NATIVE LAND — AND WHAT
BEFELL HIM THERE

THE winter of 1695-96 was balmy and mild, and the smugglers — known as “owlers” — between France and England were very lively. The great ladies of London actually had the felicity of seeing, in the secrecy of milliners’ back parlors, some dolls dressed in Paris, so as to show the very latest fashions. Also, if one were very discreet and had much money, certain French laces, silks, and perfumes could be bought on the sly. Every smuggler did a good business that winter except one, which lay sluggishly at anchor at a little fishing village near Calais, during the whole month of January. Dark nights came, but the “owler” moved not. The people in the little town thought the captain had lost all enterprise, but it was none of their affair; smuggling was too common for the movements of a single “owler” to excite remark in a little fishing village.

At last, one night, two gentlemen arrived in a travelling-chaise. One of them was a very tall man, with long, delicate fingers like the royal house of Stuart, and he was evidently a soldier. He had with him, however, no attendant. The other person’s status it was difficult to discover, except in one particular — he was evidently a gentleman. He had a very fresh com-

An Egremont Returned

plexion, a pleasant eye, and when he smiled there were dimples in his cheek like a girl's. He was plainly, even commonly dressed, in old clothes, but was scrupulously neat; and he carried a fiddle-case. Yet he was treated upon a footing of perfect equality by the tall gentleman. The two ate together, and even slept together in the one room which a fisherman's family could spare them. Two days after they arrived, came a vessel from England bringing despatches, and that night, just as the moon was going down, the two gentlemen went aboard the "owler," her anchor was picked up, and her nose was turned toward England.

They were barely three hours at sea when they were landed at Dover, where they both took the London coach, but at different points. Nor did the tall gentleman bow, when the younger one with the fresh face, and the dimples, and the fiddle case, mounted the top of the coach. Indeed, his manners changed excessively, for he said angrily to the young man who had slept in the same room with him the night before, "Have a care, my man. You are crowding your betters."

"I humbly beg pardon, sir," replied the young man, touching his hat, "but I am a stranger in these parts, and indeed, not much used to the road anyhow."

The two travelled all the way to London in company, and scarce exchanged a word with each other. But at certain stages, when they were for a time the only passengers, there was evidently intelligence between them.

It was late at night before they reached the great, smoky city — wrapped in blackness, a river dark as the Styx flowing sluggishly, and great piles of buildings frowning down upon it. London after dark in 1696,

The House of Egremont

was a city of dreadful night. The stopping place of the coach was at the Cock tavern in Bow Street.

The tall gentleman had a small portmanteau, which he himself handled, to the disgust of the tavern porters. The younger man had a little bag, such as might belong to a man who carried a fiddle-case. The porters did not think it worth their while to offer their services to this person.

The two departed from the inn without waiting for supper, the gentleman merely saying he had engaged lodgings elsewhere, while the fiddler alleged that he must look for a cheaper place to sleep. Although they went in opposite directions, within fifteen minutes they were walking up and down a narrow street together, in the shadow of a church porch.

"I hope, my Lord Duke," said the younger man, who was Dicky Egremont, "that you and Sir John Fenwick and the other gentlemen engaged in this effort to restore the King will understand exactly how I am placed. My services and my life are at the disposal of our rightful King; that I consider the duty of a Christian and a loyal subject. Nay, more. As I am a priest, and without domestic ties, my life is not to me what it is to a layman, — to you, my Lord Duke, for example, with a young wife. Therefore, if there be any extra hazardous duty, it is clear that I am the man to take the risk. I am no hero, but I hope I am an honorable man, and capable of doing my duty."

"I have not the least doubt of it, Mr. Egremont," replied Berwick, warmly; "and your coming to England at this time, when there is a price upon the head of every member of the Society of Jesus is proof enough of your courage."

"But I wish to say," continued Dicky, "that I am

An Egremont Returned

here also to administer the sacraments to those of our religion who have long been deprived of them, especially the poorer people about Egremont. As long as our family was in possession of the estate, the few poor families who are of our religion were protected by the lords of the manor. But now, for near eight years they have been like sheep without a shepherd. I do not think the danger for me very great. In one quarter of Devonshire my name is a safeguard. I think no young gentleman in that county was as great a favorite with the common people as my cousin Roger. None of them would betray me, no matter how hot Protestants they are. If you can communicate with Tom Hawkins the fiddler, at the house of David Hodge, shoemaker, in the village of Egremont, you will find a willing servant of the King."

"I have the name in my pocket-book, and I will not forget you, Tom Hawkins. And you have mine, Mr. Calthorpe, at the Globe tavern in Hatton Garden. Good-bye. May God prosper you."

"The same to you, my Lord Duke. Adieu."

Dicky walked on in the darkness until he reached a place of entertainment of the humbler class, a considerable distance from Bow Street. A few tunes on his fiddle got him a bed and supper, — he had money, but was wary of showing it, — and after playing for the revellers for an hour, he was glad to tumble in to a flock bed and sleep, — the sweetest sleep, he thought, he had had since he had left his native country, now more than nine years before.

There was ever a flame of adventure in the blood of the Egremonts; for Dicky, priest that he was, found himself perfectly happy when, next morning, he trudged out of London toward the sweet country, with his bag

The House of Egremont

on his back, and his fiddle in his hand, albeit he was without a place to lay his head, and it was death for him to be on English soil. It was likewise felony to harbor a Jesuit; therefore Dicky had privately resolved to learn to live out of doors, so as to jeopardize as few lives as possible.

He walked on all that day, keeping the highroad to the southward, and stopping at half a dozen houses of entertainment, where he made his darling fiddle sing. He was careful to play only English tunes, or to give English names to the French ones he played, for he had no mind to let any one suspect that he was lately from France. While it was true the body of the people at that time were groaning under the taxation imposed by William's wars, and were therefore extremely friendly to the Jacobites, yet the superstitious fear of the Jesuits still prevailed. Dicky Egremont, stout Englishman that he was, would have had short shrift had his real calling been known.

It was mild for the season, and being out in God's free air all day was solid happiness to Dicky, who had been cooped up between walls, with books chiefly for company, during nearly ten whole years. He was so joyous in spirit that he wished to dance and sing as well as play. As he walked along the highroad toward noonday, he saw, down a little lane, some laborer's cottages. A dozen bare-legged children were playing before the doors. Dicky, who loved children, went toward them, and smiling ran his bow across the strings of his violin. The children stopped, awed for a moment, but when he began to play "Green Sleeves," and to sing the song as he played, they came about him in open-mouthed delight. Then one little urchin was moved to dance, and Dicky, by way of encouraging the others,

An Egremont Returned

began to do the most beautiful steps, playing meanwhile. At that all the little ones fell to dancing, the urchin who had opened the ball seizing the forepaws of a meek-looking dog, and whirling him around madly. Dicky played faster and faster; his fingers wandered into that favorite air he had so often played to Bess Lukens's singing, "*Les Folies en Espagne*." The sweet, rippling music brought the mothers to the cottage doors, who stopped from their daily toil long enough to smile at the merry young fiddler, who had such girl-ish dimples in his cheeks and who was dancing so gayly, stopping sometimes to prod the impertinent urchin who danced with the dog, when the poor animal was being whirled around too fast and barked piteously.

When the children stopped dancing, and sat down panting, Dicky stopped playing, and only then. A woman came out and very civilly brought him a bowl of milk and some brown bread. Dicky devoured both with the greatest relish. Not all the dainties he had even seen in France tasted like that English bread and milk; it was like that he used to have at Egremont when he was a little lad.

Presently it was time to take the road again; for he was anxious to be in Devonshire as quickly as possible. The children followed him to the highroad, and after he had played them a parting tune he went upon his way. He had scarcely gone a hundred yards, when the boy with the dog came running after him.

"Here, sir," he said; "my daddy has told me I must get rid of Bold; we can't feed 'im, and I'll give 'im to you if you'll take 'im."

Dicky was charmed. A dog — an English dog! He had not owned one since he left England. And a

The House of Egremont

dog would go excellently well with his disguise and would be a friend as well. As for Bold himself, there was nothing imposing about him but his name. Dicky concluded that Bold had not been used to the society of gentlemen; all the same, never was dog more gratefully received.

"Thank you, my little man; and here is a shilling for you. I'll be good to the dog; that you may depend upon."

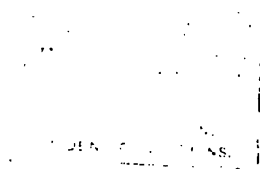
The boy looked at the shilling which Dicky put in his hand, and then, appalled at such munificence, fled away without another word.

Dicky whistled to Bold, who came and licked his hand, and the two instantly agreed upon eternal friendship. But as Dicky walked briskly along, richer by a friend and companion, he bethought himself of his behavior and began to see that he had been singularly imprudent, and his escape from detection was due wholly to the ignorance of his audience. First, he should not have played "*Les Folies en Espagne*." Then his dancing had comprised some foreign steps which might have instantly aroused suspicion; and he had so far departed from his assumed character that he had given money, instead of asking it. However, a miss was as good as a mile; and like most men of courage, Dicky troubled himself little about dangers as soon as they were past.

A few days of walking brought him into the Devon country. He had not up to that time dared to make known his character as a priest, but once in Devonshire, he was on familiar ground. He knew the few Catholic families in the county, and he had rightly said the Egremonts had friends enough in that county to protect him, Jesuit though he be.



DICKY WHISTLED TO BOLD, WHO CAME AND LICKED HIS HAND



An Egremont Returned

first stop was at the house of a Catholic gentleman Exeter. Here he remained for two weeks in , celebrating mass, instructing and baptizing many persons. Although there was danger in having it that he was in England, it got bruited abroad the well-wishers of King James; and many s of Jacobite principles, Protestants as well as ics, visited him in secret to know how matters t St. Germain's. The prospects of an uprising in ad were glowing. The people objected to the l money, which the Whig government had forced them, and they demanded to know what had be- of the vast sums raised by ruinous taxation. ment was forced to prove itself. The speaker of ouse of Commons, Sir John Trevor, was convicted ving accepted a bribe, and was expelled the . The East India Company was found to have fifty thousand pounds, of which ten thousand went ie pocket of William of Orange. He had made a of five sixths of the county of Denbigh, the t domain of the Prince of Wales, to his Dutch e Bentinck. The Parliament obliged him to the grant. He had given Lady Orkney a good f Ireland; that too the rude "parliament men" as m called them, roughly and coarsely compelled , restore. They would have done worse, had not m wisely prorogued them.

nwhile all these things, especially the forcing iers to disgorge the estates of English and Irish men, were full of encouragement to all the s of the Egremonts. Dicky discovered it was at Hugo Egremont, alias Stein, had been unable nate an acre of Egremont, much as he desired io, — and he was so generally hated and despised

The House of Egremont

in the country, it was said, that he was applying for a permanent foreign appointment; he stood in great favor with the court party.

There was very great activity among the Jacobites assembled in London, and it was desired by the friends of King James in Devonshire to communicate with them. Who so well fitted as this young Egremont, who was quite unknown outside his native county?

Two expeditions to and from London did Dicky and Bold make, — Dicky each time with papers in his pockets enough to have hanged a hundred men. He steadfastly declined to know their contents.

“For, in case I am stopped, I wish to say that I do not know what these letters refer to, nor the names of the persons writing them. That they are meant to help toward the restoration of our lawful King, I know, and never will deny.”

After the second of these journeys, when the Jacobites only needed the word to rise, a thunderbolt fell from the sky. Sir John Fenwick was arrested, and with him Sir John Friend, General Rookwood, and many other gentlemen of condition, all implicated in a plot to abduct William of Orange. One gentleman, known as Mr. Calthorpe, escaped. There was some doubt about his identity, but it was noted that he had long, slender hands, with delicate fingers, like the Stuarts. Dicky Egremont and some others knew who this gentleman was.

The failure of the expected uprising was a disappointment to Dicky Egremont, as to all the other friends of King James. But he had come to England upon other work. It was to preach, to pray, to administer the sacraments to the poor, — for it was toward these unfortunate children of the common Father that Dicky Egremont yearned. Truly, the Egremonts had

An Egremont Returned

ever been well liked by the humble people. It was with joy, therefore, that he left the house of his friend, near Exeter, to go among the poor and despised of men; but on the very day that he proposed to go in secret to Egremont, news was brought from London that among the persons indicted for an attempt to murder William of Orange, was one Richard Egremont, known to be a Jesuit priest in disguise, who had been active in the matter from the start. Dicky at once disappeared from the neighborhood of Exeter, but within a week was apprehended, together with Bold, his dog, in the village of Egremont, and taken in chains, as became a villain, and would-be regicide, to London, to be tried for his life. And for the second time an Egremont stood in the prisoners' dock, accused of a capital crime against the person of William of Orange.

The affair for which eleven gentlemen were tried, and nine convicted, was so very like the former one, in which Roger Egremont had been engaged, that it seemed as if the young Jesuit was convicted on evidence offered in his cousin's case. It was the same story, — a plot to kidnap William of Orange. Only, the statements of the two kinsmen were entirely different. It was well remembered that Roger had coolly avowed his intention, and when asked, in tones of horror, if he contemplated murder, remarked that in a *mêlée* with pistols and swords, it would not be surprising if some one got hurt, and for his part, had the Prince of Orange refused to submit, he would have had it out with him, and one or the other might have been killed.

Dicky Egremont, on the contrary, swore that he knew nothing of the plot, and was not in the confidence of the conspirators; but that he knew it was a movement for the restoration of King James, and as such he will-

The House of Egremont

ingly assisted in transmitting information. This was enough, even without his frank avowal that he belonged to the Society of Jesus. It was not even necessary to stretch a point, as in the case of Sir John Fenwick, in whose case but one witness could be found to convict him, instead of the two which the law required. This was promptly remedied by a bill of attainder, and, as his counsel urged, "the whole force of parliament was used to take away the life of a man whom the laws of his country could not condemn." The prisoners were confined in Newgate gaol. Bold, with an intelligence far beyond his plebeian and mongrel breed, managed to follow his master even to Newgate. The poor animal was so ugly and worthless — except the faithful heart of him — that he was worth no man's stealing.

The first acquaintance Bold made, after sneaking into Newgate, was Diggory Hutchinson, Bess Lukens's old admirer. Diggory remembered something about the Jesuit gentleman's dog having followed him, and on taking Bold to Dicky's cell, the two companions met with such a rapture of friendship that Diggory's heart — not a bad one — was touched.

"I can't let you have him sir," he said to Dicky, "but I'll keep him, and fetch him to see you once a day — till — till —" till Dicky was convicted and hanged, was in Diggory's mind.

Dicky was charmed at the idea of having his dog with him, even for an hour a day, and thanked Diggory most gratefully. Diggory remembered the last Egremont who had inhabited Newgate, and reminded Dicky of it when he brought the prisoner his gaol fare and his dog, on the first day of his imprisonment.

Dicky, on this announcement, was disposed to regard Diggory as more of a friend than ever.

An Egremont Returned

"Do you remember my cousin Roger? Well, they were forced to put him out of gaol; perhaps they will do the same with me," he said, smiling. The dreadful position in which he found himself had not taken the ruddy color out of his face, nor the laughing light from his eye.

Diggory shook his head; he knew more of the fate which might befall a prisoner in Newgate than Dicky did. It might be thought that a prison turnkey must in time lose all human feeling. Not so. Diggory Hutchinson, whose heart was not bad, performed his duties with the same exactness, and in the same spirit, that the head master of a school does.

After a time he grew sufficiently intimate with Dicky to ask, in a stuttering voice, and with something as near a blush as his complexion would allow, —

"Did you ever hear, sir, or see, a lass by — by — the name o' Lukens? — Bess Lukens; as some said, followed Mr. Roger Egremont to France."

"I know her well," cried Dicky, "and a better girl never lived. She did, in truth, go to France; but she did not follow my cousin or any other man there." And then he gave Diggory a rosy description of Bess's condition and success.

Diggory went away very thoughtful.

Within two weeks the trial of the conspirators began, and among the nine men convicted was "Richard Egremont, some time of the parish of Egremont and county of Devon, by profession a popish priest and of the Jesuit order." Sir John Fenwick was sentenced to be beheaded, but Richard Egremont, Sir John Friend, and Sir William Perkins, — the last two wealthy London merchants, — were sentenced to be hanged, to be cut down while still alive, to be quartered, and their heads and dismembered bodies to be displayed at Temple Bar.

The House of Egremont

This sentence was pronounced in Westminster Hall, at dusk on a spring evening. It was received in silence. When the young priest rose, however, in spite of their grotesque fear of his order, a wave of pity swept over the assembled audience. He was so young and boyish looking, — he had never looked his twenty-six years less than at that moment. Having listened with perfect composure to his sentence, the young priest asked permission to speak. Chief Justice Holt, noted for his mildness toward prisoners, and who had, seven years before, ordered the chains struck from the limbs of Roger Egremont, readily gave permission, saying, —

“A man in your condition, sir, should ever be allowed to make such justification as he can, no matter how clearly he may have transgressed the laws of the land.”

“I humbly thank your lordship,” replied Dicky; “I desire only to say, on the word of a priest, a gentleman, and an Egremont, that those who turned King’s evidence, and swore that I was concerned in any scheme to murder, swore falsely. But that I did all I could, which was but the carrying of some letters back and forth, to assist in the restoration of King James, I own; nor have I any apologies to make. And I shall suffer death cheerfully, my conscience being clear.”

The prisoners were at once removed, to be hanged the next day but one. Dicky, handcuffed to a constable, like his fellow-prisoners, was led down the gloomy stairs, between lines of curious persons; some denouncing him, others pitying his youth and supposed misguided conduct. Arrived at the great door leading into the street, he was put into a hackney coach, with another constable on the other side of him.

An Egremont Returned

The night had fallen, and with it had come a death-like fog, which wrapped the great city. The coachman could but feel his way along the dismal streets, faintly lighted at a few points by oil lamps. Dicky was perfectly composed and cheerful, and was talking of Egremont with the constable to whom he was handcuffed, when suddenly a scuffling of hoofs was heard, the coach started off violently, rocking from side to side, cries arose, — the horses had bolted.

“Keep cool, sir,” said the man on his left to Dicky; to which Dicky replied, smiling, —

“Keep cool yourself, my man. I am to die on the day after to-morrow, anyhow; surely there is no occasion for me to be alarmed.”

The horses were now tearing along the stony street. At a sharp turn there was a cry, and a dark object whirled from the box on to the ground. It was the coachman. The horses, now quite free from restraint, rushed on madly, and the next thing came a shock, a crash, shrieks, the trampling of many horses; the hackney coach had dashed full into a chariot and six, with several gentlemen inside of it. Dicky felt a violent blow on the head, a sudden wrench, a falling to the ground. There was a plunging of horses, groans and cries of pain, many persons running together, some one calling for a lantern. In the midst of it he felt himself free from his companion. He scrambled to his feet and staggered instinctively out of the *mêlée*. He found himself leaning against the corner of a wall. There was much confusion; one person in the chariot was killed, and one of the constables was shrieking with pain. Dicky recognized the man's voice. A crowd had collected in two minutes; and then the cry arose, —

“Where is the prisoner?”

The House of Egremont

That one word restored to Dicky Egremont his strength and his senses. He turned instantly, and fled through the darkness.

He ran until he was breathless, and then, stopping for a moment to listen, heard not a step behind him, and looking before him he saw that he was on the very brink of the black river. Looming up before him were ghostly hulks and shadowy masts and spars of ships, with lanterns twinkling feebly. He looked about him, and seeing not a soul in sight, fell upon his knees, crying, —

“I thank Thee, O my Father, for Thy protection so far; but if Thou hast ordained that I should suffer death for Thy sake, I ardently accept Thy will.”

Then, rising to his feet, he walked rapidly on, keeping close to the river bank. He met few persons, and those he easily concealed himself from in the dense and overhanging fog.

He became conscious of pain in his left wrist, and realized that it was badly wrenched and skinned where it had been dragged through the handcuff. But there was no blood to betray him. He pulled the sleeve of his body-coat down over it, and walked on. When he had gone, he judged, at least three miles down the river, he stopped. There were still vessels to be seen, but they were not thickly clustered as higher up. There were some houses scattered about, — one of them, a small, tumble-down place, quite uninhabited, with its door wide open. He entered it, closed the door as well as he could, looked about him and saw that the decaying windows were fast, and then, after giving thanks, he lay down upon the bare floor, and in two minutes had fallen into that sweet sleep which had ever been the portion of his brave and innocent spirit.

An Egremont Returned

He did not waken until he heard, in the far distance, the chiming of a church clock at nine o'clock in the morning. It was still dark; the fog lay black and heavy over city and river. He peered out of a broken window and saw that he was in a lonely place, with no houses very near. He was ravenously hungry, but he dared not go forth for food.

He spent the day in alternately watching and sleeping. He had neither money, food, nor weapon — was ever fugitive worse provided for flight? Yet his courage did not falter. Truly, there was no cowardice in the Egremont blood.

Toward night of this first day, hunger drove him forth. There were a few scattered houses with cultivated fields along the river bank, and one of these tilled spots was a turnip field. Dicky made for this field in the half darkness, and ate his fill and crammed his pockets with turnips. Then he ran back as fast as his legs would carry him to the deserted house.

In all the waking hours since he had found himself without handcuffs, his mind had been working on the problem of escape. The river before him seemed the only natural and feasible highroad for him. There were many vessels moving about, and at anchor. In particular, there lay, immediately in front of the deserted house, a heavy lugger, such as was used in those days for voyaging between England and the continent. And balancing his slender chances for escape, Dicky thought if he could get on board that vessel it might be well for him. They were always ready to ship a likely young man. Dicky was well-made and active, though short; only, he knew nothing of a sailor's work, and his injured wrist might betray him.

With this plan in view, Dicky lay down on the bare

The House of Egremont

floor and slept easily and soundly that second night. Luckily, the weather was extremely mild, and the discipline he had known at Clermont and at Paris — to live on meagre fare, to lie on a hard bed, to rise before daylight — stood him in good stead.

He waked at five o'clock, the hour at which he had always been accustomed to rise while at the seminary. The first thought which had occurred to him was that it was the day on which the nine Jacobite gentlemen with whom he had been tried would mount the scaffold. Dicky Egremont wondered at the providence of God which had suffered him alone of them all to escape; him to whom death would be less bitter than to men who left families behind them, whose estates were likely to be sequestered, their children certain to sink into poverty. Dicky Egremont would have reckoned himself the happiest man on earth could he have exchanged places with any one of those unfortunate gentlemen, and would have gone cheerfully to his death to have spared an agonized wife and weeping children the loss of a husband and father. But God had decreed otherwise; and Dicky, falling upon his knees, prayed long and earnestly for his unfortunate fellow-prisoners, who were to suffer that day.

As soon as it was light he glanced out and saw the lugger still lying at anchor, with no signs of leaving. He spent that second day in prayer, and having but one means of mortification, he ate no turnips that day, and so went fasting.

The day grew foggy, and it was not until the stars were out in the evening that he saw any indications of leaving. Then a boat passed back and forth from the shore, and presently, coming shoreward, stopped as if waiting for some one. And in the dusky April

An Egremont Returned

evening, Dicky saw a figure, evidently a seafaring man, walking toward the place where the boat waited.

Dicky surmised that this man was the skipper, and going out of the house, made for him and accosted him boldly but civilly.

"Sir," he said, "are you in want of hands on your vessel?"

"I always am," replied the captain; and then, his practised eye seeing that Dicky was a gentleman, he asked, "What straits have brought you to this pass?" At the very first word the skipper spoke, Dicky's heart bounded with joy. The Devonshire burr ran through all his speech.

"You are a Devonshire man, I see," said Dicky, coolly; "so am I. Take me aboard and I will tell you that which will make you willing to let me work my passage to wherever you are bound."

"You are right; I am Devon born and bred," replied the skipper. "We sail with the tide for Antwerp. Where is your passage money?"

"Do you think I would have asked to earn my passage had I money in my pocket? My friend, I am a gentleman of your own county. If you take me to Antwerp, I give you the word of a gentleman that you shall have, within a month, the best rate you ever had for a passenger in your life."

The skipper motioned him into the boat. Arrived on board, he dared not ask for anything to eat in spite of the hunger that gnawed him like a wolf. He waited, therefore, with such patience as he could, while the anchor was hove; and, a fresh breeze rising, in half an hour they were moving slowly down the river, stealing past mansions and farmsteads and low-lying houses, by the faint gleam of the stars.

The House of Egremont

When they were well on their way, the captain leaving the deck for a few minutes, supper was served in a stuffy little cabin by a ragged cabin boy. By that time Dicky was too faint to eat ravenously.

"I have seen that to-day," said the skipper, "which might spoil any man's supper. I have seen the heads and quarters of two London citizens, Sir John Friend and Sir William Perkins nailed up at Temple Bar. They were hanged to-day."

"God rest their souls," said Dicky after a moment. And catching the man's eye fixed on him meaningly, he saw that he was known. He turned up his sleeve and showing his bruised arm, said, —

"I am Richard Egremont, who was to have been hanged this day, but God willed it otherwise. I am of that Devonshire family which has seen its estates given to bastards and strangers, and we have been forced to eat the bread of exile for more than seven years. Now give me up, if you choose."

"I do not choose," replied the man, after a moment. "Not all of us in England like our new King and our new taxes. I be no Papist, but I will betray no gentleman because he is a Papist or even a Popish priest. And though I be not often in late years in Devon, yet, I have heard of Mr. Roger Egremont being turned out for his father's by-blow, and a shame I think it. So eat and sleep in peace, Mr. Egremont, and when I return to England I'll swear I never saw or heard of you."

"I thank you for an honest man, worthy of Devon — the best county in our England, the best people —"

"They have not treated you and your trade over well," dryly remarked the skipper.

"They are blinded by prejudice and have been evilly

An Egremont Returned

taught things about us which are not true; but we English in the Society of Jesus fight for the privilege of coming here, albeit we risk our necks by it; and I tell you, my friend, though I be glad to get out of England now, I propose to return some day, and having escaped with my life once, I shall make that a claim to come again. And now tell me the mournful story of those unhappy gentlemen who died under the hangman's hands to-day."

The skipper told the story with that calm brutality with which a common mind, however good, relates horrors. He spared not one detail of the hanging or quartering.

"There was much murmuring on the part of the crowd, and it was openly said that the reason the King is so hot after Sir John Fenwick, who is not yet apprehended, and for whose conviction the whole power of the crown was used, when it was found impossible to convict him under the law, is because Sir John laughed at the King's being beaten by the old hunchback, as he called Marshal Luxembourg, in the Low Counties. The gentlemen who suffered to-day all died bravely, and called the people to witness that they died for their King."

Dicky remained silent for some time, and then, rising, said.

"I must have a last glimpse of my country. Though she drives me away from her, like a cruel mother, yet will I love her, — and will take no other for a step-mother."

He went on deck, and remained as long as he could catch a glimpse of the shadowy shores, past which they glided. Then, kneeling down, he prayed earnestly for his country, and a part of his prayer was that he might soon return.

The House of Egremont

Within two days they made Antwerp. Dicky was not suffered to land without money, and when the skipper pressed half a dozen gold pieces upon him, Dicky, with that strange loyalty which an exile always feels for the land from which he has been driven forth, said, with tears in his eyes, —

“There are not in the world such good hearts and open purses as in Devonshire.”

One afternoon, about a month afterward, Bess Lukens determined to hire a coach, and take the air. Not that she had ever learned to enjoy herself in a coach, or that the motion ever failed to turn her brilliant complexion into a sickly green, and to make her feel a horrible coach-sickness which is only a trifle less than seasickness. But she considered it due to her altered position, she being now a regularly engaged singer at the King's Opera, under the Abbé d'Albret; and also as a mark of respectability, as well as prosperity. Her old friend Mamma Mazet, now grown very feeble, was asked to accompany her, but the old lady having declined, Bess, set forth alone in the coach; she wore a silk sack, and a hat with feathers in it. She drove out of Paris, and for a mile or two along that beautifully paved road which led to Versailles. There was sure to be much good company seen on this road, and on this joyous May afternoon there were coaches, chaises, and cavaliers in plenty. Bess had some acquaintances in this gay throng. Her beauty and her voice had made her well known in that idle society, which concerned itself chiefly with personal affairs. But the reputation she had acquired and which she carefully fostered of never having a civil word in return for a compliment from a gentleman, kept her from being over popular. The

An Egremont Returned

afternoon was bright and balmy, and the motion of the coach affecting her less than usual, she remained out until nearly sunset. Returning by way of the unfinished gate of St. Martin, she caught sight of a familiar figure sitting on a pile of rubbish left by the builders. It was Richard Egremont, — but looking so ill that Bess was alarmed when she saw him. His usually round, fresh face was haggard, and his short and somewhat stocky figure was but skin and bone. When Bess saw him she stopped the coach, and called out to him joyfully. Dicky, however, made no reply, but looked at her with strange, lack-lustre eyes. Bess, jumping out of the coach, went up to him and caught his hand, — it was burning with fever.

“Why, Mr. Egremont!” she cried; “how glad I am to see you back again, and alive! We were in great misery here for some weeks, knowing you to have been caught, and thinking you would be hanged. But the good God saved your life.”

“I think,” said Dicky, with a look of wandering in his eyes, “that I did wrong to return. I am going back to England to-morrow. I was very well treated while I was there, — not in prison a day — not a day. If I had but my fiddle now — ”

Bess looked at him hard, then catching him by his arm proceeded to drag him toward the coach.

“What are you going to do with me?” feebly asked Dicky.

“Take you home, put you to bed, and send for an apothecary,” replied Bess, literally shoving him into the coach.

“But — but — my superiors — ” he faltered vaguely; to which Bess made a brief and comprehensive reply.

The House of Egremont

"Drat your superiors!" she said. "Drive home, coachman, as quickly as you can."

Bess was as good as her word. Papa Mazet was not at home, but Mamma Mazet assisted Bess in undressing Dicky and putting him to bed; and when the apothecary came, he looked very solemn indeed, and said that the young gentleman might recover, and he might not. And this he said every day for six weeks, when Dicky lay raving with fever, or stupid from its effects.

On a certain calm, bright June morning he waked up quite himself. The birds were singing in the trees, in the old garden back of the house, on which his windows opened. He thought at first they were singing "*Les Folies en Espagne*," but presently perceived they were not. And by his bedside sat Bess Lukens, as fresh as a rose; toil and sleeplessness left no mark upon her strong frame. Dicky, gathering his wits together, and surmising all that had happened since that faint remembrance of Bess carrying him off by force, said, in a weak voice, but oh, how full of gratitude and affection, —

"Bess Lukens, how good art thou to me — and to all the Egremonts! God bless thee!"

He had never called her Bess before, and his simple words went to the very heart of her. That she, Red Bess, the gaoler's girl, should have the proud Egremonts acknowledge her goodness to them! It pleased her honest and simple heart more than any praise on earth, except — well, Roger's was always excepted. So she answered, patting his thin hand, and calling him Dicky for the first time, —

"Thou art a good lad, Dicky Egremont; I care not if thou art a popish priest," — at which Dicky laughed feebly, — "and I hope you will have sense enough to keep out of England, where you will surely be hanged

An Egremont Returned

if you venture again." A gleam of light appeared in Dicky's sunken eyes.

"I shall return to England as soon as I am allowed," he said; "and as for hanging — 't is not a painful death, I believe. An English hangman is sure to do the job properly."

CHAPTER XVI

ONCE MORE IN THE SALOON OF THE SWANS

ROGER EGREMONT had by 1698 acquired a presentiment that by the sword alone should he prosper. At the peace, in 1697, he was more fortunate than those deserving men who found themselves shut out of the reduced military establishment, and forced to accept that dole of five, ten, or twenty pistoles which poor James Stuart, with tears in his eyes, gave to them wrapped in small pieces of paper, as he sat in his closet at St. Germain. Under the reorganization, Berwick was given a regiment of foot, made out of the Irish brigade, and in this regiment was Roger Egremont, reduced, however, from major, in the war establishment, to captain again. In two years he had not once seen Berwick. Roger had been with his regiment in Flanders, not caring again to revisit France. He had heard, however, several times from Berwick, now a sober married man; brief, naive letters, earnest in friendship, and unconsciously betraying, what his world already knew, that in the society of the beautiful, kind, graceful, and charming Honora de Burgh, Berwick's noble and tender heart had found perfect happiness. He had a son, — a boy, beautiful like his mother. Then Roger heard, through others, that this sweet wife of Berwick's was fading away in consumption; and in the winter of 1698 she breathed her last.

In the Saloon of the Swans

Within a month Roger received a letter from Berwick. It read:—

“You have doubtless heard, my friend, of the death of my wife. I will say nothing on that subject. You have seen her, and you know my heart. I intend to travel as soon as the spring opens. Will you go with me? I know of no one else whose company would be so acceptable. Take advantage of the present peace; no one can tell how long it will last. We shall not be called upon, I think, to fight again for James II.; our next fighting will be for James III. I reckon upon your coming with me.”

Roger was at Compiègne when he got this letter. He replied at once, agreeing to it. His leave was arranged without trouble, and in March he found himself at St. Germain, to meet Berwick, and to pay his respects to his King and Queen.

St. Germain was always a haunted place to him. He had not heard one word direct from Michelle since the day, five years before, that he had parted from her. He dared not ask. But not for one day in those five years had she been absent wholly from his mind. The beauty of her eyes, the faint perfume of her hair, was ever present to him. He had not one single memorial of her—he needed none. He had however, his little bag of earth from Egremont; and still slept with it under his pillow.

He found Berwick but little changed outwardly. He had ever been a sedate man, but with a quiet fund of bonhomie. Now, however, under that calm and composed exterior, Roger saw in him a grief so deep, so unspoken, that it must have changed the whole man. Berwick's brief and fleeting time of happiness had been overclouded by the apprehension that Honora de

The House of Egremont

Burgh's sweet spirit was not long for this world; and when she was called away, in the springtime of her youth, he felt as if so sweet and delicate a flower was not fitted to withstand the chilling blasts of this life. He spoke of her occasionally to Roger, and often of the beautiful boy, like — too like — herself, which she had left him; and Roger came to love and respect Berwick the more, from the deep and manly Christianity with which he bore this dreadful sorrow. This time Roger was lodged in the palace close to Berwick's apartments. The glory of the inn of Michot had departed. The crowd of brave and merry gentlemen who had thronged the little town five and six years before, and who had regarded St. Germain's as a place of temporary retirement, were gone — many of them to the country from which there is no return. The others were chiefly, like Roger Egremont, grown hardy soldiers, living honorably upon scanty pay.

Roger had three things to do: first, to provide himself with a horse, for Merrylegs, after having carried him through five campaigns, was now to be honorably retired. Roger bestowed him upon Madame Michot, to draw the weekly cart to and from Paris, he being yet fitted for such light work. The second was, to see Dicky; and the third, to see Bess Lukens.

He heard of Bess at St. Germain's before he saw her. Bess was making a great noise in the world in more ways than one. As a regular singer in the King's Opera, she was supposed to be under the tutelage of the Abbé d'Albret, conductor of the music. Bess, however, who was as hard to govern as most *prime donne*, refused to submit as absolutely as she should have done to the Abbé, and still clung to the methods of Papa Mazet, whose house she declined to leave. The Abbé and her

In the Saloon of the Swans

self had words, and Bess in a rage, called him "a popish liar and meddler." There was but one thing to do for this: Mademoiselle Luccheni was retired from the Opera until she should learn to acquiesce in discipline. The King, however, noting her absence, sent for the Abbé, and desired that Mademoiselle Luccheni be at once reinstated. His Majesty went so far as to say there was not in Paris such another voice as Mademoiselle Luccheni's. The Abbé, raging but helpless, went to Bess and proposed an armistice. Bess, to whom it had been conveyed that the King desired her return, coolly declined any terms short of absolute surrender. The Abbé was forced to capitulate. Things went on harmoniously for about a fortnight. Then the Abbé, giving a musical party at his house, at which Monseigneur deigned to signify he would attend, rashly promised, without consulting Bess, that she would sing. Bess, on hearing this, betook herself to St. Germain's, alleging that she had been asked to sing at the château, and the commands of her own King and Queen must ever take precedence. This producing a great commotion, the English Queen felt herself called upon to write a letter to Monseigneur, saying that Miss Luccheni had misunderstood things. Her invitation turned out to have come from the ten-year-old Prince of Wales, who, meeting her in the forest, recognized her, and asked her to sing to him then and there. Bess was delighted to sing for him, and so charmed the lad that he invited her to come to the château the next Sunday, and sing for his father and mother. This, Bess stoutly declared, she considered a command, as coming from her Prince. Several dozens of eminent persons, including the Kings of France and England, the Dauphin and the Archbishop of Paris, became mixed up in the affair. It was very

The House of Egremont

exciting, and eclipsed in interest the news from Spain. Bess Lukens was the only person involved in the matter who thoroughly enjoyed it. All this, Roger had heard at St. Germain, and it lost nothing in the telling when Bess, with glowing cheeks and bright eyes, recounted it again to him at Paris. A born comic actress, she brought out all the absurdities in the matter, mimicking the furious little Abbé to the life, and even repeating the King's own words, and the King's own walk as he strutted up and down the Orangerie at the Petit Trianon, and Madame de Maintenon's pious exhortations.

"Of course," said Bess, coolly, in conclusion, as she plumped herself down in a chair, "that old ape of a popish Abbé is right, — excuse me, Roger; I forgot for the moment you were a papist yourself. Papa Mazet is too old, and his methods are *not* those of this age, and he can't teach as well as the people the Abbé employs. But an't that the more reason why I should swear that Papa Mazet is just as capable as ever he was, and is to-day the best teacher in Paris? Did n't I tell that old monkey of an Abbé that Papa Mazet could walk ten miles, ride twenty, and go thirty in a coach, just as well as ever he could, when the poor, dear man can barely go twice round the garden, with his stick and my arm to help him? I hope I am an honest woman," declared Bess, with an air of extreme virtue, "and I mean to stand by Papa Mazet if I lose my place in the Opera for it."

Roger laughed as he had not done for years, so heartily; and then, both of them growing sober, they studied each other furtively, to see such marks as Time might leave. Roger Egremont was now thirty-two years old. His complexion had grown dark and weather-beaten during his years of campaigning. He had lost,

In the Saloon of the Swans

as men do, that gayety of heart which shines through the eyes, and his curling brown hair, which he still wore upon his shoulders, now more from habit than vanity, had some silver threads in it. But he looked a soldier, straight of figure and direct of glance. Bess thought him more nearly handsome than ever in his life. His tender friendship to her showed no abatement. As for that other woman, some woman's instinct as true as truth told Bess Lukens that Roger Egremont had loved Michelle well, and could never forget her. Bess would rather have had it so. She shrank from the thought that he should be any woman's successful lover. As for Roger, he never saw Bess without an increase of admiration for her. She improved year by year, in a certain dignity of appearance and manners. She would never dream now of putting on man's apparel to disguise herself for travelling. She was now fully able to command respect for herself in her own proper person. Her beauty seemed to grow in perfection, for in place of that rosy flush of girlhood her features had acquired greater delicacy, which comported well with her softer manners. She was now in her twenty-eighth year, but she showed the flight of time less than Roger.

"And so you took care of my cousin Dicky when he was so ill on his return from England two years ago. Truly, we must stop calling him Dicky, and say Father Egremont," said Roger.

"He will be Dicky Egremont as long as he lives," replied Bess, smiling; "he never can be rid of that boyishness which makes us all love him. Have you seen him yet?"

"I go to see him from here. He is not free to see visitors until the afternoon."

"Oh, yes. Those everlasting superiors of his!

The House of Egremont

They would have fetched him away before he was half well, but I went out to St. Germain's and got some gentlemen there to persuade them to let him stay with us until he got his strength back — as the apothecary too said he should. Just as he was able to play the violin and we could have some sweet music, a couple of old black gowns — popish priests, I mean — came and took him off. He pretended he was glad to go, but he always wants to go where he thinks it is most likely to be disagreeable for him."

"That is not much the way of the Egremonts," said Roger, laughing; "but Dicky is a soldier under orders, and he does well not to shirk them."

When he was rising to go, Roger asked a question which brought a deep blush to Bess's cheek.

"Well, Bess, when shall I be called upon to give you away at your wedding? — for I will by no means allow Papa Mazet that privilege."

"Never, Mr. Roger. I am well enough off as I am. I have no taste for marrying in my own class, and no ambition to marry above me, and be flouted by the man I marry. Besides, I have to take care of the Mazets, who made me, such as I am; and when they are gone I shall hope to find some other old people or orphan children to take care of; so, Bess Lukens was I born, and Bess Lukens will I die.

And, strange to say, Roger believed her, although it is difficult for any man to persuade himself that any woman can really live and die happy and unmarried.

Then he went to the Jesuits to see Dicky. Dicky had not changed in the least, and the two cousins walked up and down the garden of the Jesuits' house, and talked as if they had never been parted a day since they left Egremont. Dicky had much to tell of that brief

In the Saloon of the Swans

and tragic visit to England. "And I saw Egremont, Roger; I went by night. It looked prosperous, — the farms well tilled, the park in good order, the dun deer more abundant than I had ever known them. But — but every oak tree on the place is cut down. I was told that Hugo made near eight thousand pounds by the sale of this timber alone."

Roger ground his teeth. Those oaks, every one of which was fit to be the mainmast of a man-of-war! It had been his dream to make his King a present, worthy of a king to give, as well as receive, of those miles of sturdy oaks, that were indeed too noble for any use but that of the masts and spars of fighting-ships. Dicky, seeing Roger was troubled by this, continued:

"I heard that Hugo tried to turn such of the estate as he could into ready money; he acts as if he doubted that it would always be his. But he could find no one to take the land, and for very shame he cannot sell the jewels and pictures. His foreign blood comes out more and more every day, the people told me; and he is now seeking a foreign appointment, as minister of William of Orange, and as he has been steadfast in the Orange interest, 'tis very likely he will get what he wants."

"God reward him!" was Roger's comment; and the kind of reward this might reasonably be expected to be was easily inferred.

"And, Roger," said Dicky again, after a moment, "it will not be long before I see Egremont again. I have had the promise, ever since I came back, that at the next vacancy for England, I am to be sent. For there are so many young men, of the best blood of England, whose heart's desire it is to lead the forlorn hope of the Society of Jesus in our native country, that we have to

The House of Egremont

make applications far in advance. I have been waiting to go ever since I recovered from my illness. When one of our fathers is imprisoned, or sent out of the country, or there is a request for one, there are ten men, each begging that he may be sent; but the next call it is my turn to answer, — and I am the envy of all my English brethren here, and at Louvain, and St. Omer's, and Clermont."

"And you under sentence of death if you set foot in England!" cried Roger, excitedly. "It is not right; it is not right — and I shall protest to your superiors, — nay, I will go to the King himself."

"Tush, Roger. What did I join the Society for? To sit here, safe at Paris, while better men risk their lives and liberty in England, in North America, all over the world? No, I too am a soldier and I claim the post of danger. Would you have an Egremont do otherwise?"

"Yes, but you are under the death sentence —"

"You should hear of the sufferings of our fathers in North America. A plain English hanging would be merciful to many of them. Besides, when every English Jesuit is on record as applying for duty in England, would you have had me, Richard Egremont, hold back?"

Roger hesitated a moment, then, throwing his arms around Dicky as when they were little boys, he cried:

"No, my lad. I would not have thee to hold back. God guard thee well — for a brave youngster."

The sun was near setting, and the yellowing light shone on the solemn yews and clipped cedars of the garden. A bell began to toll inside; it was time to part. The two young men walked hurriedly to the solid iron gate in the wall, and stood for a moment, with their

In the Saloon of the Swans

hands clasped, and each with a hand on the other's shoulder.

"Good-bye, dear Roger," said Dicky. "If we should never meet on this side of Death, know that I ever loved you better than anybody in the world, and esteemed you more than any man I ever knew. And if you should hear of me as dying on the scaffold in England, remember, my last thought, my last prayer will be for you."

Roger stood silent. Some inner voice spoke with the clearness and certainty of the bell which continued its melancholy tolling through the mild spring air. And the bell was saying, "Farewell, farewell." Roger's eyes were moist, but Dicky's sparkling blue ones were filled with a calm and happy light; the warrior soul of him was not to be alarmed at the scaffold, the executioner, the knife. He pressed Roger in his arms.

"Good-bye, dear Roger, good-bye," he cried again, and then turning ran back through the garden toward the house. Roger walked along the dark, narrow street in the spring twilight. The bell was still tolling solemnly. It was still saying "Farewell."

He went to his inn, got his horse, the third Merry-legs, and rode back to St. Germain's at a sharp gait. He roused himself somewhat from his depression, but a conviction settled upon his soul that he should never again see Dicky Egremont.

Next morning he got a message early from Berwick: "Be prepared to start within twenty-four hours."

There was, then, but a day before him. He had not yet been to see Madame de Beaumanoir, Roger meaning every day to go, but putting it off as men do unpleasant things. But that was his last chance. Moreover, François Delaunay, who had been absent for

The House of Egremont

a time, returned and came to the castle to see him, and to bring him a reproachful message from the old Duchess.

François was the same François — good-hearted, timid, and still unsuccessfully attempting a rakish air and swashbuckler manner.

"The Duchess is still the same," he confided plaintively to Roger, as the two walked up and down the terrace in the March sunshine. "God never made but one such woman, I think."

"At least she has not a bad heart," replied Roger, consolingly, but laughing at the same time.

"N — n — no," dubiously assented François; "but — think of a woman who has spent ten years trying to make a swashbuckler out of me!"

And as François tapped himself gloomily on the breast, Roger was obliged to confess to himself that Madame de Beaumanoir had set herself an impossible task.

In the afternoon he took his way along the familiar road to the avenue of the château. He knew every step he trod. Here was the entrance into the forest, where the French King's messenger had brought the letter to Michelle on that spring morning, just five years ago almost to the day. There was that woodland path from the meadow, where he and Michelle had walked hand in hand, a shepherd and his shepherdess, on that August evening, after the hay-making. He could scarcely believe, as he stepped upon the marble terrace and entered the great hall of the château, that her graceful figure would not presently appear, and that he should not hear her charming voice. And he dared not let his mind dwell on her state at that moment.

The old Duchess received him in her large salon.

In the Saloon of the Swans

She was scarcely changed at all. She had been withered and weazened and bright-eyed six years before, and she was still withered and weazened and bright-eyed, and she still wore the green brocade gown.

"At last!" was her greeting; "you have not been near me in five years. Such is the way of men though, — a little love when we are young; no woman can hope for more."

"Madam," replied Roger, "I have been at St. Germain's but one week in five years, until I came four days ago. And when I was here before you were absent."

"True enough. But why have you so avoided the place?"

"Ask a soldier, madam, why he is here, or why he is not there?"

"Tut, tut. You had some reason for not coming. Well, I can hardly blame you. Since the peace, the poor old praying King has, I think, given up hope of ever getting back to England, and I suppose he must have asked himself every day since '88 what he ran away for. And I, too, have well-nigh abandoned all hope of going back, and shall have to end my days in a foreign country. If my husband had died but a year before he did, I should have been back and settled in England, and I'd like to see any Orange prince or princess that would have turned me out!"

"I wish, madam, from the very bottom of my heart, that your spirit had animated the King. But I ever thought there was some temporary weakness of the mind that drove him to act so strangely. He, one of our bravest admirals, — whom Maréchal Turenne and the Prince of Condé declared to be more insensible of fear than any man they had ever known — absolutely

The House of Egremont

ran away when he was implored but to remain, and assured that all the fighting should be done for him. Well, that is all over. We shall have our chance though, with James III."

"You will, my dear, not I. Now tell me of your adventures, for I hear that Berwick praises you extremely, and you have won promotion."

The old lady, being very pressing, Roger told her such of his adventures as he thought would please her, but he had signal unsuccess.

"All about war, in which, according to your own account, for everything you did, your men or your superior officers deserved the credit; and not a single love-affair! Not even a little scrape with a married woman! Look here, Captain Roger Egremont, I once thought you fit company for his glorious Majesty, King Charles the Second; but know you, I now esteem you fitter for this snivelling, forgiving, pious old figure of a King we have at the palace yonder. I shall not let François Delaunay associate with you; he will be sure to learn some goodness or godliness of you that will make him more prudish than he is. I am very much disappointed in you, Roger Egremont."

"Truly, madam, you grieve me. But if I have had no love affairs, consider, I have had but little money. So long as my father's bastard enjoys my estate, so long shall I be a poor man. I am like some of the other poor and virtuous in this world, — virtuous because I am poor."

"François has not even that excuse. But you have not asked me one word about my niece, the Princess of Orlamunde."

Roger felt himself grow pale, but he answered readily:

"I was about then to inquire of her Highness."

In the Saloon of the Swans

“Highness fiddlestick! Dearly has she paid for that ridiculous title and that semi-royal coronet she wears. Did I not tell you and Berwick that one look at my cousin of Orlamunde convinced me that he was a scoundrel? And I do not think my niece a woman to submit humbly to a scoundrel. She made some spirited attempts to drive out the men and women rascals and harpies whom the Prince had collected around him; but, of course, she failed. Then, instead of taking to lap-dogs or devotion, as most women do, my lady defiantly leads her own life; has clever men about her, when she can get them; has learned the lesson of despising what the world says, — a dangerous, dangerous lesson for any woman to learn; drives her husband wild by her defiance of him, and then laughs at him; in short, acts just as one could foresee a proud, injured, fearless woman would. I fancy, too, her health is breaking down under the strain of misery. In one thing alone has she been judicious; she kept the French King informed of exactly how Orlamunde was standing to his engagements — which is very poorly indeed — as long as she could; and but for her Orlamunde would have sold those two fortified places to the allies, within a year from the time he guaranteed them to Louis. Even now it is not certain that the French guns have not been sold to William of Orange, — twenty-four bronze cannon, so I have heard. Of course, this only makes Orlamunde hate her the more, and he has found means to stop her correspondence with France. And who, think you, is the precious gentleman through whom Orlamunde has been transacting this vile business with Dutch William? Your bastard brother, Hugo Stein — who is the English diplomatic agent at Orlamunde.”

Roger had been getting paler and paler as the old

The House of Egremont

lady spoke, her dark eyes sparkling. Now he flushed deeply.

"Yes, Hugo Egremont, as he calls himself, is Orlamunde's *alter ego*, and has been, almost since that unfortunate marriage. It was he who was after the Prince to give up the fortified places, — and it is he who has been trying to persuade the Prince to sell the bronze guns, and he may have succeeded. He seems to have plenty of money, so I hear — got from his estates in England — "

"My oak timber!" burst in Roger, thinking of the eight thousand pounds of which Dicky had told him.

"And has the entire confidence of his government."

"He was ever an astute scoundrel," again broke in Roger, growing a deeper and darker red.

"And he hates Michelle, and she hates him. And he provides the Prince with money — scamps need a deal more than honest gentlemen. And it is not likely that the English and Dutch are giving him money for nothing; so I am mightily afraid the twenty-four guns are gone."

The old lady talked on vivaciously, and Roger heard every word, but as in a dream. And presently he rose to go, and made Madame de Beaumanoir a handsome compliment, and kissed her little withered, jewelled hand, and walked back to the palace, by way of the terrace, still like a man in a dream.

Michelle ill, wretched, defiant, badly used, — poor, poor unfortunate! The knowledge of her misery, however it pierced his heart, did not make him forget that he should give Berwick the information Madame de Beaumanoir had given him — and so he went straight to Berwick's apartments in the Palace and told him.

Berwick's comment on the Prince of Orlamunde

In the Saloon of the Swans

was simple: "The scoundrel!" Then he added: "I was going to Marly to-night to say farewell to the King of France, and I will go at once. It is important that he should know of Orlamunde's treachery, if it has really occurred."

And in ten minutes Roger saw him start off, in his black riding-suit, for Marly.

Before night he returned. Roger was walking up and down the courtyard with the little Prince of Wales, telling him stories about England, while the boy's governor, Lord Middleton, walked on the other side of the lad. Berwick rode into the courtyard, dismounted, threw off his black riding-cloak, and after ceremoniously greeting the little Prince and his governor, said to Roger, —

"We ride for Orlamunde to-morrow, at sunrise, by order of the King of France. All, and more, is true, of what Madame de Beaumanoir told us. And the man who is working against us, the man who is the agent of William of Orange at Orlamunde, the man we are ordered to have flung out of that wicked place, wicked as its rascal Prince, the man we are to take the vengeance of the King of France on, — is Hugo Stein, sometime known as Sir Hugo Egremont, of Egremont."

"And I shall take my private vengeance on him," said Roger, in a quiet voice, but his comely countenance growing ugly, in the way Michelle had often noticed when wrath possessed him.

And at sunrise next morning they took the road to Meaux, to Epernay, to Châlons, to Vitry, to Bar, and through the country of the Vosges, just as they had done five years before. It was at the same season of the year, and the face of the country was so little changed that Roger had the strange feeling of having

The House of Egremont

made the journey, not once, but a myriad of times before. He could see, as they passed along the highways, through fields and forests, and past towns and villages, Michelle's airy figure on her horse; he could hear her voice as plainly as if she were speaking then. He went into the great cathedral of Meaux and knelt in the same spot where he had knelt with her, and the merry birds sang with glee under the eaves, just as they had done on that morning when he had been with her in the church. He saw the old castle of Vitry, bathed in the spring sunshine, so like — so like what it had been before. When they entered the passes of the mountains, Roger determined to go by the charcoal-burner's hut. Berwick asked no questions; he knew well enough why Roger Egremont should go over every step of that former journey. The hut was gone, the place desolate. Roger dismounted, while Berwick, with his two servants, rode on. In half an hour Roger rejoined him, and spoke not a word until they reached their lodging for the night.

So much was the same; and yet they, Roger Egremont and the Duke of Berwick, were changed inexpressibly. Each had known a grief which marks an epoch in every life; one of those sorrows which wring the heart and leave a blood stain on the book of life. They spoke little of this, being both of them valiant men, not given to mouthing their misery; but this sad, sad change was ever present with them.

They made their journey, as if by some tacit arrangement, exactly as they had made it, day by day, five years before; and the very day, five years before, that they had entered Orlamunde, on the eve of the anniversary of Michelle's marriage, they reached the little capital and put up at an inn.

In the Saloon of the Swans

"For I would not accept even a lodging from the rascal Prince," said Berwick, and Roger heartily agreed with him.

In the evening, though, having given notice of their arrival to the Prince, they must appear at Monplaisir at eight o'clock. All, all was the same. The straight, broad avenue of clipped trees, the fountains of the dolphins ever playing, the statues, the marble terrace, the white palace, beautiful in the evening glow; a deep blue sky, with a young moon and a single blazing star beside her; and the same mob of powdered lackeys, and the same miniature state as of five years before.

The Prince received them in that noble hall where the wedding banquet had been held. He was yellower, sicklier, wickeder, more dissipated-looking than before, which is saying much. He was attended by his old chum, Count Bernstein, and a new one, Baron Reichenbach, who seemed a bird of quite the same feather; and there were other gentlemen present, and among them, — oh, iniquity of iniquities! — was Hugo Stein, under the name and title of Sir Hugo Egremont of Egremont, in the County of Devon, England.

He had ever been a more strictly handsome man than his half-brother; and as the time that Roger had spent in camps Hugo had spent at courts, so was Hugo more delicately skinned, more soft and supple, than Roger. And he was magnificently dressed, wearing a superbly jewelled dress-sword, on the hilt of which sparkled an emerald set with diamonds, which Roger recognized as having once belonged to his own mother, and he also knew nearly every other jewel in the hilt.

It was the bitterest moment in Roger Egremont's life when his eye, travelling around the company, fixed itself on Hugo; and when Hugo, ever adopting an

The House of Egremont

attitude of conciliation, advanced, saying, "Welcome, brother!" Roger stood like a statue for one moment, and then advancing, with arms outstretched wide, cried, —

"Welcome, Hugo Stein. Never was I so glad to see you before. A great, a glorious thing has happened. We have come here to notify you that you have spent your own and your master's money in vain. And likewise to make it so hot for you that you will be compelled to leave Orlamunde. I cannot forbear embracing you in my joy." And seizing Hugo suddenly about the waist, Roger lifted him bodily off the floor, and flung him headlong through the open window. And as Hugo went tumbling out, head-foremost, Roger caught him by the leg, and wrenched the dress-sword from about him, then dropped him on to the flower-bed below the palace window.

Instantly there was an uproar. The Prince, white with rage, turned to Roger as he stood smiling and examining the hilt of Hugo's sword.

"Sir, you forget yourself amazingly. This conduct cannot be tolerated."

Roger bowed low, still smiling. The Prince, then turning to Berwick, said in a voice which trembled with excitement, —

"I say, my Lord Duke, this conduct cannot be tolerated in my presence."

"Yes, your Highness," replied Berwick, also smiling. "And may I ask, in all respect, what are you going to do about it?"

Roger, all this time, was breaking off the hilt of the sword, which he afterwards threw out of the window after its late master.

The Prince hesitated and moved uneasily in his seat.

In the Saloon of the Swans

Berwick stood, calmly regarding him ; Roger continued to examine the sword-hilt. Count Bernstein stooped and whispered something in the ear of the Prince, who spoke after a moment.

“Count Bernstein tells me that these gentlemen are half-brothers and there is feud between them. Some allowance can be made for Captain Egremont’s feelings, if he will apologize for his unbecoming conduct.”

“To whom shall he apologize, your Highness?” asked Berwick.

“To myself, of course.”

“Then, your Highness,” replied Berwick, with much readiness, “I ask, in Captain Egremont’s behalf, a week to consider your proposition. Meanwhile, I am the bearer of an autograph letter from His Most Christian Majesty, which I shall be pleased to deliver at your Highness’s pleasure.”

No man who ever looked into the eye of James Fitzjames, Duke of Berwick, felt like defying him, certainly not this miserable creature of Orlamunde. So the Prince passed over the circumstance, resolving, as such beings do, to take secret and private vengeance on Roger Egremont before he left Orlamunde.

“We will now attend the ladies in the saloon,” said the Prince ; and rising, the whole company marched into the Saloon of the Swans. The great saloon was blazing with wax lights, and over the mirrored walls were the silver swans still sailing, sailing nowhere. And on the dais at the upper end sat Michelle — sat the poor, unhappy Princess, her cheeks wan and painted, her glorious eyes full of mischief and melancholy, her slender figure slenderer than ever, — a picture of what misery may do for a woman.

Roger advanced with Berwick to pay her his respects,

The House of Egremont

and the sight of her, and the touch of that cold little hand put all thought of Hugo Stein out of his mind. She received them with perfect composure; she had had time and opportunity to learn composure under disquieting circumstances in the last five years. When she spoke, her voice was unchanged in its thrilling sweetness; that and her winning smile had survived five years of marriage with the Prince of Orlamunde.

"It is a pleasure to see you again," she said, looking into Roger's eyes; "I have not seen a friend for five years past."

All around her heard this speech, which Roger could not but think imprudent.

"And," she continued, laughing — oh, how sad it was to hear her laugh! — "you are unchanged, a violent and turbulent man when you are angered, but as gentle as a dove when you are pleased. I thought you would not sit quiet when Hugo Stein was at hand."

So, already the news had flown about of his pitching Hugo out of the window. Hugo had thought it wise to depart, particularly as he had lost his sword, without which, he could not, according to etiquette, appear at the levee.

"Madam," asked Roger, "is not that the way with most men in the presence of a sworn enemy?"

"No, no," cried the Princess, looking at the Prince who was standing on the dais close by her. "In Orlamunde, for example, when a man is angry with his enemy, be it man or woman, he watches his chance stealthily, and when he thinks he is quite safe, he deals a poisoned thrust."

Roger was not only surprised at this ill-timed frankness, but even secretly shocked. Having never exercised the slightest forbearance in his life toward those

In the Saloon of the Swans

he conceived to have injured him, and having not half an hour before wreaked his vengeance on his bastard brother without the least regard to time or place, he was confounded that a woman should do likewise. But Michelle, being quick-witted, saw that she had not pleased him, and changed her manner to that of the most caressing softness. And listening to every word were Madame Marochetti, and the Countess Bertha von Kohler, who still reigned at Orlamunde, and who was first lady-in-waiting to the Princess, much to Madame Marochetti's annoyance.

There was to be a concert presently, and in a little while the musicians were ordered to appear, and the company seated themselves. A tabouret was provided for Berwick, and a small chair for Roger Egremont; but Roger, seeing that he had carried things with a high hand in the beginning, concluded to adopt it as a regular policy while at Orlamunde. Therefore, saying to the Princess, "By your leave, madam," and receiving a nod in return, he seated himself quietly on the edge of the dais. Something like a shiver went round. The ladies were all secretly delighted with his impudence, especially his old acquaintance Countess von Roda, who was quite out of favor and had turned pious.

The music began. Every man has it in him to do something good, even Karl, Prince of Orlamunde. What was good in him was the capacity for art. His palace was exquisite, his orchestra was perfect. When the violins and violoncello and flutes breathed forth the divine music of Gluck, it was as if the Saloon of the Swans palpitated with delight, so delicious, so searching, so heavenly was the harmony. Roger listened, thinking it was like the music of Paradise; and when the rapture of melody had lasted some time, he turned

The House of Egremont

to look into Michelle's eyes and saw the saddest sight. She was leaning back in her stately chair, her head resting on one thin hand sparkling with jewels, her long lashes on her cheek. She had fallen asleep out of pure weakness and weariness, in the midst of the enchanting music, with all those hostile eyes upon her. Bertha von Kohler was smiling maliciously; Madame Marochetti laughed outright. The Prince, turning to her, rudely awakened her. Michelle started, looked at him with hatred in her face, then catching sight of Berwick's kind and pitying eyes fixed on her, smiled softly. Roger's heart swelled within him. To this sad pass had ambition brought a woman born to love and to be loved.

CHAPTER XVII

IN WHICH CAPTAIN ROGER EGREMONT ACTS AS
COACHMAN, AND LIEUTENANT-GENERAL THE
DUKE OF BERWICK AS FOOTMAN

THAT night, returning to their lodgings, Berwick said to Roger: "One week must do our errand here, for we have but a week in which to consider the apology you are to make to the Prince."

"Only a week," said Roger, reflectively; "I am not nimble enough of wit to think out a suitable apology in one little week — and that I shall tell him."

"So I supposed."

Next morning brought Count Bernstein, very early, to the joint lodging of Berwick and Roger.

"My dear sir," he said, debonairly, when Roger appeared in answer to the Count's name. "I come from Sir Hugo Egremont, your half-brother. Naturally, he is annoyed at your behavior yesterday, but he considers that you are — pardon me — a man of impetuous temper, and will make allowances. If you will deliver to me the jewelled handle of the sword, which, in your — your excitement last night, you wrenched from his person, he will overlook all else. I am authorized to receipt for the handle."

"My dear Bernstein," replied Roger, in the friendliest way possible, "you have been grossly imposed upon. There is no such person as Sir Hugo Egremont."

The House of Egremont

He who assumes that name and the arms of Egremont is a bastard, by name Hugo Stein. My father was his father — and a great sinner my father was."

Bernstein made a gesture of impatience.

"And," continued Roger, as Berwick entered the room then and gravely saluted Bernstein, "I can call the Duke of Berwick to witness that I was up at sunrise this morning, hammering the jewels, which are mostly heirlooms in my family, out of Hugo Stein's sword-hilt. I have them here in a little box in my bosom, and the fragments of gold I saved carefully and will thank you to return to Hugo Stein with my compliments."

And he thrust a little parcel into Bernstein's hands.

Bernstein, in a rage, turned to Berwick.

"Sir," he said, "the Prince of Orlamunde will take cognizance of this affair. Your friend and protégé must submit to the authority of his Highness."

"Alas, Bernstein," replied Berwick, "I cannot answer for Mr. Egremont submitting to the authority of the Prince of Orlamunde. William, Prince of Orange, Stadtholder of Holland, and *de facto* King of England, a great prince, although a usurper, could not bring Mr. Egremont to submission, and how does the Prince of Orlamunde compare with William of Orange?"

Bernstein rose, speechless with anger. Berwick and Roger accompanied him ceremoniously to the head of the stairs, Berwick saying, "We shall hope to see you when we have our appointed interview with the Prince at noon."

At twelve o'clock the two found themselves entering the palace doors of Monplaisir. They were ushered into a room Roger had not before seen, known as the Prince's cabinet. It was small and luxurious, and the bright sun of April laughed in at the one tall window, with its

Captain Egremont acts as Coachman

yellow satin hangings. There was an inner room, which seemed smaller still.

Seated at a table in the first apartment, was Prince Karl, and with him Bertha von Kohler.

The Prince rose as Berwick entered, and saluted him pleasantly; nor was he cold to Roger.

"I desire to place in your Highness's hands," said Berwick, suavely, "the letter of His Most Christian Majesty. Likewise to convey to you the views of His Most Christian Majesty on certain matters concerning the league between the kingdom of France and the principality of Orlamunde."

The Prince extended his hand for the letter. Countess Bertha wore a broad smile of delight. She aspired to be the Maintenon of this dissipated, evil Prince.

"Pardon," said Berwick, bowing, "I must ask your Highness for a private interview."

"Come into my closet, then," replied the Prince, in a fretful voice.

Roger and the Countess Bertha remaining alone, the Countess appeared to be furiously vexed.

"His Highness discusses questions of state before me," she said; "I do not know why the Duke of Berwick can object to my presence."

"Nor can I, dear lady," said Roger, with a grin, "unless it be that he has orders from his Most Christian Majesty to make his communication in the strictest privacy. And it would be exactly like the Duke of Berwick to do what the King of France told him, in spite of your own sweet wishes."

Countess Bertha turned very red in her anger, unlike the Prince, who turned pale when he was in a rage.

"At all events, I shall know all that passes; of that you may be sure."

The House of Egremont

"My charming friend, of course I know it. The Prince leaks like a sieve. The King of France took, I think, much trouble for nothing."

Countess Bertha's eyes flashed. The impudence of this fellow was past bearing.

"I think I understand you, Mr. Egremont, — and I understand why you and your friend the Duke of Berwick treat the Prince and me with such studied disrespect. We all had eyes last night. There is a personage here in whom you take a singular interest. Her enemies are your enemies, her feuds are your feuds, her friends your friends; shall I speak her name?"

"Not, dearest madam, if you have the least regard for your present health and future welfare. For, I swear to you, if you speak that lady's name before me with any but the most profound respect, I am your enemy and you are mine, to the very last hour of my life. Remember, creatures like you hold their power by a very uncertain tenure, and the personage you dare to allude to holds hers by the power of a subsidy of two hundred thousand livres a year. The Prince loves money better than he loves you, and upon the report that we take back to France does that two hundred thousand livres depend."

Countess Bertha sat down again, still trembling. Roger sat and smiled at her with the utmost blandness.

In a few minutes Berwick came from the inner room, and he was heard saying: "Thanks for your Highness's safe conduct. For two days I shall, with Captain Egremont, visit Mondberg and Arnheim, and return with my report to your Highness."

The Prince remained sulking in the inner room, and Berwick, after a pause at the threshold, said, "I have the honor to bid your Highness good-morning."

Captain Egremont acts as Coachman

Then, nodding slightly to Countess Bertha, Berwick's tall figure stalked out. But Roger made her a low obeisance, and walked out backward, with many genuflexions, as if he were leaving the presence of royalty — much to the lady's fury.

He joined Berwick, and the two walked together through the Saloon of the Swans, the marble corridor, and many other sumptuous rooms, Berwick growling:

"The abandoned villain! But I have him — I can make him squeal, and by God, I will!"

On the marble terrace outside, the Princess was walking up and down, with the Marochetti and some other busybodies about her. They closed in around Berwick and Roger, and there seemed to be a sort of preconceived attempt to prevent them from having any private conversation with the Princess. But Berwick, in his direct and simple way, foiled them. "Madam," he said to the Princess, "may Mr. Egremont and I have the honor of a few moments' private talk with your Highness?"

"Certainly, my lord Duke," replied the Princess, walking apart from the crew, which slunk back.

She led the way to a marble bench, over which stood a statue of Silence, holding a rose in one hand, with the finger of the other to her lip. On the Princess's invitation, they sat, Roger on a garden chair which he drew up, and Berwick on the bench with the Princess. The ladies and gentlemen in waiting hovered as near as they dared, but out of earshot.

Roger observed Michelle well. She was indeed pale and thin, and had that look most wretched to see on a woman's face, — one of defiant misery. But she was plainly softened by the presence of her two friends. To Roger Egremont's eyes, she was only more lovely,

The House of Egremont

more enchanting, in her woe than in her triumphant youth. How did he long to take this poor, stricken lamb to his bosom, and soothe and cherish her!

"Madam," said Berwick, "we have come on a double errand, — to see how the Prince is keeping his engagements about Mondberg and Arnheim, and to see how it fares with you. The King has given me large discretion; he has no mind to sacrifice you, and is your unwavering friend."

Michelle's eyes filled with tears, but she laughed as she turned away, saying tremulously, —

"I must not let those wretches yonder see me weep. They have not yet wrung a tear from me that any one has seen. As for the Prince's engagements, I cannot tell how he is keeping them, but this I know, that Hugo Stein" — she turned to Roger, and a brilliant smile broke over her face — "is the accredited agent of William of Orange, and he has been trying to induce the Prince to sell the twenty-four bronze guns for about one half their value. Countess Bertha is in the scheme, and no doubt will get a part of the money."

"We shall settle that very easily, madam," replied Berwick. "We go to Mondberg and Arnheim this very day, and if the guns are not there, we return here, and make the Prince account for them. If they are there, with what you have told me, and with what the Prince betrayed involuntarily to me, I shall demand the instant withdrawal of Hugo Stein, on pain of withholding your dowry."

"And without my dowry, the Prince will not want me," cried poor Michelle, her sad eyes beginning to sparkle.

"Madam," said Berwick, "if you wish to return to France, I cannot myself escort you, as it might make

Captain Egremont acts as Coachman

political complications ; but Mr. Egremont — who is only my travelling companion, and is therefore independent — ”

“ Will take you, and cut the throat of any man who would keep you back,” interrupted Roger, vehemently.

Michelle leaned back smiling, and trying to keep back her tears.

“ I thought I had not a friend in the world,” she said, “ but now — Only, if I should leave, what would become of the poor French who have settled here? For there are in Orlamunde a dozen or so of French families which have come here to practise their arts — such as perfumers, wig-makers, and such. Those people look to me.”

“ We may trust the King of France to look after his subjects,” replied Berwick. “ But now tell me, madam, all you know of Hugo Stein.”

“ I know nothing good of him,” said Michelle, a deep blush appearing upon her pale cheek. “ He had the insolence to pity me, as a neglected wife, — to — to — dare to say that I could find in him the devotion the Prince lacked — and much else. I ordered him from my presence ; I could not order him from the palace, because I have no authority here — the Countess Bertha reigns at Orlamunde — ” this with extreme bitterness. “ He appeared with unabated assurance at the levee after this interview, and excepting that he is insolent to me, where once he cringed, there is no change in him. But I know that he has orders to get the twenty-four guns, if possible ; and I believe he is offered a place at court in England, provided he can get them.”

Roger’s heart swelled as she spoke, but his spirits rose likewise. How sweet was the thought of revenge upon his enemy ! And he had little doubt that Berwick would make Orlamunde too hot to hold Hugo Stein,

The House of Egremont

Then they talked together for an hour.

Michelle had much to ask of her friends in France, and some gentle words of sympathy for Berwick when he gave her, in a few words, some particulars of the loss of his young and lovely wife. At last she rose. Berwick, who was no waster of time, wished to start for Arnheim that afternoon.

"For I foresee," he said with a grim smile, "that a week will be the extreme limit of our stay here. The Prince has graciously allowed Mr. Egremont a week to make up his mind to apologize for pitching Hugo Stein out of the window, — and, as I know he will not be able to do it in that time, I take it that we shall be leaving shortly."

"Oh that I could go with you!" cried the poor Princess. "If you but knew —" Then she stopped speaking, rose quickly, and tripped away gayly, waving her hand and crying out, "Au revoir."

All that day Michelle had the feeling of an impending crisis — something decisive was in the air. True it was that Berwick came armed with all the authority of the King of France, and as such, having great power over the Prince. But it was something more than that — a crisis was at hand in Michelle's life. This she felt as she had never felt before. It made the time pass as if she were in a dream.

On the Wednesday, Berwick and Roger Egremont had left for the fortified places, which were only about fifteen miles away — and on the Friday were they expected to return.

As soon as their absence was known, Sir Hugo appeared at Monplaisir. He had thought it judicious to keep away for a day, especially until the blast of ridicule had blown over — for this precious crew fell upon each

Captain Egremont acts as Coachman

other with savage mirth when one of them met with disaster. At the levee on Wednesday evening, however, he appeared in the Saloon of the Swans. He was as cool, as calm, as handsome as ever, and as superbly dressed, except that he wore a new sword, without a jewelled handle. He had to hear many sly innuendoes, and much open rallying upon his exit through the window, on meeting his half-brother. He took it with stoical composure.

"My brother is quite light-headed in his fury," he said, and told the story of Roger's throwing the plate of beans into the face of William of Orange. He told it in a loud voice as he stood at the foot of the dais, so that the Princess, sitting on her canopied chair, heard him distinctly.

"And he is a disloyal man and a rebel, and being both evil and unfortunate, I can but pity him; and besides, he is my brother, — we are the sons of one father."

"Did you say your brother was both evil and unfortunate?" asked Michelle, leaning forward.

Now, this was an unlucky speech for the poor Princess, because it was already in the air, as Countess Bertha had said, that there was love between the Princess and the English gentleman.

"I did, madam," replied Sir Hugo, impudently. "But perhaps you know him better than I."

"I do," retorted the Princess, in a soft voice. "I know that at St. Germain's he had the high regard of his King and yours, and that of the King of France, upon whose will alone Orlamunde exists as an independent state. You are a very rash man, Hugo Stein, to show yourself in the presence of your half-brother Roger Egremont, and of Lieutenant-General the Duke of Ber-

The House of Egremont

wick, who comes here with the fate of Orlamunde in his hands."

Sir Hugo's face turned scarlet as she called him Stein, and all his dear friends laughed — so much so that the Prince, who was playing lansquenet in the next room, asked what the joke was; a dozen persons pressed forward eagerly to tell him.

Presently Sir Hugo got near enough to the Princess to whisper in her ear, "You shall pay for that speech, my lady."

"Just as you please," smilingly replied Michelle, out aloud. "I do not think that Orlamunde is large enough to hold you and me much longer; and when you go, you carry with you the bribe of your master William of Orange, — but when I go, I take with me most of the ready money which goes to support the Countess Bertha."

And with this shot the Princess lay back in her chair of state, her dark eyes full of laughter and triumph. Sir Hugo turned his back upon her, at which she laughed a rippling, silver laugh; and then the tale-bearers flew into the next room to tell the Prince that the Princess and Sir Hugo were quarrelling, or making love, — nobody exactly knew which.

On the next night was the weekly masked ball, which was, next to gambling, the very life of the princely palace of Monplaisir.

It was to be a very brilliant ball; for so the Countess Bertha had determined. The Prince had just given her a new emerald and diamond necklace, and she longed to display it. The Princess had ever taken but little interest in these balls, and when she appeared at them — which was not always — did not commonly take the trouble to put on her jewels. But to-night that

Captain Egremont acts as Coachman

strange, intangible, but convincing feeling of an impending crisis moved Michelle to dress herself magnificently, with all her diamonds blazing upon her graceful head and around her white neck. Perhaps it was partly also that feeling, which departs only with life, that makes a woman desire to shine before the man she loves.

Michelle had loved but one man, — Roger Egremont, — and he was far removed from her by all manner of obstacles; yet she had loved him well, and loved him still. She had noted all the silver hairs in his chestnut locks, all the lines that had come into his bronzed face; his coming had power to thrill her, to make her hate tenfold the wretched creature to whom she was tied, to make her blush with rage and shame at the insults he and his wretched companions heaped upon her. And having hungered for the sight of Roger Egremont for five years, she had herself splendidly dressed, and called up the color into her pallid face, and the fire into her weary eyes to welcome him.

The haunting presentiment which had not left her since Berwick and Roger appeared made her collect what money she had, as well as her jewels, and put it where she could lay her hand upon it. And also she made her waiting-women lay upon her bed a plain riding-suit and a furred mantle.

"For," she said to herself, as she descended, with stately grace, the marble staircase, "this is my last ball at Orlamunde — my last ball at Orlamunde."

When she reached the Saloon of the Swans, where there was dancing to the incomparably good music of Prince Karl's private band, neither the Duke of Berwick nor Roger Egremont was there. Michelle's heart sank a little; but Berwick and Roger had told her

The House of Egremont

they would return on the Friday night, and nothing could shake her faith in them. They would be there; sooner or later, they would be there.

Hugo Stein was already present, walking about with his mask in his hand. He bowed insolently to the Princess, who sat in her chair of state, unmasked and declining to dance, and she gave him a smile of contempt which made him long to wring her white neck.

Michelle sat in her place hour after hour, smiling, composed, and waiting. It was divined at once for whom she was waiting, — in fact, Hugo Stein had told the Countess Bertha, in tones loud enough for Michelle to hear, why the Princess waited so patiently, and why she was so splendidly dressed. Michelle heard him, but did not betray so much as by the flicker of an eyelash that his words disturbed her. But she knew that before daylight dawned Berwick and Roger would, as they had said, be at the palace of Monplaisir.

The balls at this lovely palace were noisily gay, and when, shortly after midnight, Berwick and Roger, in riding-dress, drew rein before the palace doors, the throbbing of the music, the shrieks of laughter, the rhythm of dancing feet were loud in their ears.

Count Bernstein, who received them, looked infinitely surprised, the more so when Berwick demanded to see the Prince immediately on urgent affairs.

"It is impossible," cried Bernstein. "His Highness is this moment at supper with a choice party of his friends, and cannot be disturbed. He will see you early to-morrow morning."

"Count Bernstein," said Berwick, going up close to him, "tell your master that the Duke of Berwick wishes to see him immediately, or it will be the worse for you."

Captain Egremont acts as Coachman

Bernstein, highly offended, turned away, but he dared not disobey; he, too, got his share of the two hundred thousand livres.

Berwick and Roger walked about restlessly in the entrance hall. The dancers saw them, and peered curiously at them. Once, through an open door, they caught sight of Michelle, a vision in white and pearls and diamonds, sitting in her chair of state, without a soul near her except a solitary lady-in-waiting, who yawned behind her fan. The rest, men and women, were flocking about the Countess Bertha, who held her court with the Prince at the other end of the saloon.

After a long, long wait, Bernstein came back to say that the Prince would see them in his closet in an hour.

"It must be a short hour," was Berwick's comment on this. They were shown into the Prince's closet, the same room where they had encountered the Countess Bertha three days before. An hour passed. The clock struck two. There was no lull in the crash of music and the beat of the dancers' feet upon the floor.

At half-past two Berwick had just risen to go in person to the Saloon of the Swans, when the Prince entered. And leaning on his arm was a masked lady laughing very much at something the Prince was just saying. It was the Countess Bertha.

"I beg you a thousand pardons, my lord Duke, and you, Mr. Egremont," began the Prince, airily, "but the ladies — the ladies bewitched me and kept me beyond my time."

"It is nothing, so you are here at last," was Berwick's reply.

Countess Bertha sank upon a chair, and removing her mask, fanned herself with it. She had determined to make a stand to be present at the interview; but

The House of Egremont

apparently no stand was required, as neither Berwick nor Roger took the least notice of her.

"Sir," began Berwick, without any circumlocution. "I and Mr. Egremont, in whose judgment as a military man I have confidence, have visited within the last two days, Mondberg and Arnheim."

At this, Prince Karl grew visibly paler; he was naturally of a cadaverous complexion.

"We find the fortifications in complete order, as you agreed with his Most Christian Majesty; but instead of the twenty-four bronze guns, of the latest pattern of ordnance, we found twenty-four dummies, guns made of some species of composition, painted over to resemble bronze, and calculated to deceive any one who did not minutely examine them."

The Prince was quite pale now, and bowed his head on his hand weakly.

"And," continued Berwick, "we find that they have been removed within ten days, and they cannot yet have been shipped to England; for that is their destination. I have come to require of you to replace those guns where they belong within thirty days, and to dismiss at once Hugo Stein who acted as agent for the Prince of Orange in this affair."

The Prince attempted to bluster. "You take a tone with me, my lord Duke, which a reigning Prince is not accustomed to, and," rising, "will not bear. How are you to enforce your demands, sir?"

"By at once notifying the King of France, who will withhold the pension of two hundred thousand livres which he allows you in the form of a dowry for the Princess."

The Prince sat down again.

"And I must desire you," continued Berwick, "to

Captain Egremont acts as Coachman

send immediately for Hugo Stein, as I wish my interview with him to be in your presence."

The Prince made no move, and Roger Egremont after waiting a moment rose and touched the bell. Bernstein appeared so quickly at the door that he seemed to have been listening outside.

"The Prince desires to see Hugo Stein immediately," said Roger.

Bernstein looked at the Prince for confirmation, and a faint nod was enough.

Countess Bertha, ambitious to play the part of a Maintenon, then spoke.

"My advice has not been asked," she began.

"And will not be, dear lady," replied Roger promptly. "And if you wish to remain and hear and see all that passes, you must be very good and still, else the Duke of Berwick will request to see the Prince in private, and you will miss a very interesting scene."

Countess Bertha looked at the Prince, who scowled, and at Berwick, who smiled, and concluded to hold her tongue.

In a few moments more Hugo Stein walked in. He saluted the Prince respectfully, and kissed the hand of the Countess Bertha, and then looking about him, asked suavely, —

"May I ask your Highness's pleasure?"

His Highness shuffled uneasily in his chair, and mumbled something indistinctly. Berwick spoke for him in a very cool, calm voice.

"Hugo Stein, the affair of the twenty-four guns is discovered. His Highness has precisely thirty days in which to replace them, for they are probably now in the Low Countries, and he has exactly thirty minutes to get rid of you, intriguer and falsifier that you are."

The House of Egremont

Hugo Stein was not deficient in personal courage, when driven to the wall. But he was so absolutely wedded to his own interest that he seldom allowed himself the luxury of honest indignation.

"Thirty minutes, have I?" he said. "Are you, James Fitzjames, the ruler of Orlamunde, or is Prince Karl?"

Berwick turned such a look upon the Prince that he was galvanized into action.

"I — I — am extremely sorry, Sir Hugo," he faltered. "As you know, I am under a very strict agreement, — obligation, one may say, — to His Most Christian Majesty. The Duke of Berwick has made the demand — I mean the request — for your dismissal."

Hugo Stein looked about him at the three men before whom he stood. He was an inborn time-server, but he was not devoid of sense, nor was this bastard Egremont devoid of courage. He knew all about the Duke of Berwick, and knowing the man, he felt a perfect certainty that he would have to leave Orlamunde. Nevertheless, he would make a fight for it. He turned to the craven Prince and said, with a low bow, —

"Is your Highness willing to take the responsibility of dismissing the accredited agent of the King of England at the bidding of the King of France? I beg an answer."

This opened a loophole for the poor stupid princeling. He tried to bluster.

"My lord Duke," he said, turning to Berwick; "what Sir Hugo Egremont says is of moment. It will be a very gross affront to the King of England."

"No, it will not," replied Berwick. "Your Highness must be aware that the King of England dwells at St. Germain's, and the Stadtholder of Holland reigns in England. But that is neither here nor there. If your

Captain Egremont acts as Coachman

Highness does not dismiss this man, you will hear from the King of France. His message will be brought by a couple of regiments of tall, stout fellows, who will remain at Orlamunde, to be fed at your expense, until this man, Hugo Stein, goes. And the soldiers of His Most Christian Majesty have enormous appetites ! They will eat up the palace of Monplaisir, the schloss in the town, all your Highness's carriages and horses, pictures and statues, jewels and money, — everything, in short, and possibly end by devouring your Highness."

The Prince wiped his face, which was sicklier, more cadaverous, than ever. He got up from his chair and sat down again. He looked into Hugo Stein's handsome eyes, and saw there the promise of the vengeance of a desperate man. He looked into Berwick's, and saw there the promise of the vengeance of the King of France.

He said no articulate word ; but a sound, a motion, conveyed to Hugo Stein that he was beaten. Countess Bertha sat, inwardly raging, but afraid to speak. Roger stood, enjoying himself hugely, and feeling little thrills of happiness run up and down his legs and his back at the discomfiture of his enemy. Roger could not say, however, that Hugo showed any discomfiture in his eye. He stood, a smile breaking over his handsome face, his hand gently tapping his new sword, and had the air of a man with a card in hand yet.

"So I must go, at the order of the Duke of Berwick ? Well, before I pack my portmanteau to report to his Majesty of England, I desire to see her Highness the Princess of Orlamunde, in your Highness's presence ; for I plainly perceive that it is that illustrious lady who is at the bottom of this. It is she who has kept the French King advised of affairs at Orlamunde ; and it is

The House of Egremont

she who told me, some months ago, that should I succeed in securing the guns, she would see that I suffered for it."

Bernstein, who was still hovering about the door, disappeared. There was deep silence in the little room. Every heart listened to its own beating. Roger thought that his would break through his ribs, so hard did it pound them. Through the open door came the echo of dancing and revelling. And after a pause which seemed interminable, the sweep of satin garments was heard on the marble floor, and in another moment Michelle walked into the room. Her face was full of color, and her eyes sparkled like the diadem she wore. Roger was reminded of her unearthly beauty on that day when she entered Orlamunde, and on that next, most ill-fated morning, when she had married the creature before them. She wore a rich white mantle, and casting it off her bare shoulders, she said, in her usual sweet and composed voice, —

"I am here at the request of your Highness."

As she entered, Berwick and Roger Egremont rose and bowed profoundly. Hugo Stein was already standing, and he did not bow at all; he only looked at Michelle with an unrelenting smile. The Prince did not budge at all, nor the Countess Bertha, until she was moved by Roger Egremont, who, taking her elbow firmly in one hand, gently brought her to her feet, while with the other hand he tipped her head forward until she executed a very humble bow.

Michelle flashed a smile at him, — a smile so bright, so full of light and grace and feeling, that it almost turned him dizzy.

There was a deep, deep, pause. The Prince had not answered Michelle's question, and the first voice that

Captain Egremont acts as Coachman

spoke was Hugo Stein's, — cool, measured, and ineffably wicked.

"Madam," he said, "his Highness has seen fit to order me from Orlamunde for alleged political reasons. I foresee that the truth will soon be out. He has, no doubt, information concerning our attachment. I shall be compelled to leave you to face the storm alone. But I wish to bear testimony that I am solely to blame. It was I who sought you out; who, charmed by your wit, and enchanted by your beauty, gave rein to the passion you inspired within me. Had the Prince been a more attentive husband, he would not now be lamenting his own shame. I offer, in his presence and that of the persons who are now here, to take you away with me, and to make you my wife as soon as a divorce can be obtained."

Had the sky above them parted, and the earth beneath them opened, and the whole world fallen into chaos and old night, there could not have been more overpowering amazement. It was some minutes before any one recovered sufficiently to speak, or even to think. Hugo Stein alone stood in perfect possession of his faculties, looking coolly about him with an affected humility which could not conceal a sly smile. What delicious revenge was his! How simple, how comprehensive! How many did he pay back! That wretched Prince, who, bought by him, could be frightened by Berwick; that haughty Princess, who had scorned and humiliated him; and that half-brother, who had so grossly insulted him, and against whom he had that fierce and vivid hatred which a man always feels towards one whom he has injured. Hugo Stein had, indeed, — what the bad in this life, as well as the good, seldom have, — one moment of perfect and

The House of Egremont

entrancing joy, when everything goes exactly as one wishes.

Roger Egremont was the first to recover his senses. Without a word, but with a cry like a tiger, he sprang at Hugo's throat. Berwick, catching him in a powerful grasp, forced him back into a chair, and held him there.

The Prince lay back in his chair, livid and panting. He was a very foolish prince, was this Karl whom Michelle had married, weak of will, as he was of understanding, and open to suspicion. He had enough that was human in him to wish to kill the man who asserted that he had dishonored the Princess, and Hugo, looking back and forth, saw two pairs of eyes fixed on him with murder in them.

As for Michelle, she stood as if she were turned to stone. One hand she had partly raised, and she held it unconsciously in the same position, only a few inches from the top of the carved chair on which she had been about to place it. Her gaze sought Hugo Stein's with a look of wide-eyed horror that was eloquent. Although she spoke not one single word, that look was accusation enough to condemn him a thousand times over. She actually appeared to grow taller as she contemplated him, and the indignation that brought the blood surging to her face, and even to her white throat, seemed as visible in her fair body as the rising of the mercury in a glass tube.

There was now no retreat for Hugo Stein, nor did he wish any. He had this woman — his enemy — in his hand, as he thought, and he had no mercy on her. He advanced a step, with a hypocritical gesture of deprecation, and cried, —

“Ah, Michelle, have I not made all the reparation in my power to you? If it was my fault, as I freely admit,

Captain Egremont acts as Coachman

that we had those sweet, stolen hours together, when we saw into each other's hearts, and each read the other like an open book, have I not said, at the very moment of our detection, that I am ready to marry you the instant the Prince secures a divorce? And you may yet be Lady Egremont. Look not on me so, love; remember it was not always that you so regarded me."

No one interrupted Hugo Stein, as he made this speech, which seemed in every word the direct inspiration of the Evil One. Berwick was holding Roger Egremont by main force, or Hugo Stein would never have lived to finish it. The Prince still cowered in his chair, breathing heavily, and wiping the cold sweat from his brow.

Suddenly Michelle seemed to come out of the dreadful trance in which Hugo Stein's words had cast her. The deep, red color still remained in her cheeks, and she could not quite restrain the trembling of her hands, but she relaxed her stony attitude, and, advancing to her husband, said in a quiet, natural voice,—

"This creature is perfectly sane and responsible, and as such, your Highness must now and here, this moment, take steps to punish him. I do not ask his life, although he has forfeited it a thousand times by what he has said; but I do ask—demand—his immediate arrest, and the most rigid imprisonment until he recants. After that, it will be time enough to determine what shall be done with him."

The Prince sunk farther back into his chair, and looked at Michelle with hatred and suspicion in his eyes. She waited a moment or two, and then repeated, word for word, what she had just said.

The Prince still remaining perfectly inert and speechless, Michelle moved a step nearer to him. She had

The House of Egremont

no more words to waste on him, but her gaze of concentrated scorn and loathing pierced the armor of his dullness and wickedness, and he quailed under it.

Hugo Stein smiled, and approaching her, knelt at her feet. He meant to take her hand and kiss it, but when he was fairly down on his knee, although her hand was within reach of him, he dared not touch it, and scrambled foolishly to his feet. It suddenly came over him that, if he attempted it, he might never get out of that room alive.

There was a perfect silence, except for the faint whisper of music which floated through the open door from the ball-room of the Saloon of the Swans. The celestial thrilling of the violins vibrated so softly in the air that it might have come from another world.

Michelle, after contemplating her husband, turned toward Berwick and Roger Egremont, and instantly both of them rose to their feet.

"Madam, madam," cried Roger, almost sobbing, "we will defend you!" He ran forward and knelt at her feet. Berwick, making a low obeisance to her, spoke in his usual calm and measured voice.

"Madam," he said, "Captain Egremont speaks for me as well as for himself, and I speak for the King of France. His Majesty will wreak a dreadful vengeance on those who have so deeply injured you. I make no apology for telling your Highness that you must leave this den of thieves within the hour. I and Captain Egremont, acting for His Most Christian Majesty, will take your Highness away; and trust to us to punish every man and woman at Orlamunde who has injured you!"

At this, he looked menacingly at the Countess Bertha, whom everybody had forgotten.

Captain Egremont acts as Coachman

"I thank you, my lord Duke, and Captain Egremont," said Michelle, making them a sweeping and splendid curtsy. "I leave this place, as you say, within the hour."

"How, madam?" feebly demanded the Prince, having at last found his tongue.

"Like a princess, as I came — in a coach and six," replied Michelle, with the utmost coolness.

"But — but — you cannot go, madam. I will not furnish you with a coach and six."

At this the Countess Bertha laughed, and Michelle smiled.

"The coach and six are mine, — the gift of my aunt, the Duchess of Beaumanoir, on my marriage."

"I will forbid my servants to attend you," cried the Prince, suddenly becoming violent.

"Let your Highness be at ease about that," said Roger Egremont, respectfully, to the Princess. "I am an excellent coachman, and will drive your Highness's coach and six to Paris with pleasure."

"And I will be your Highness's footman on this journey," added Berwick. "I would recommend your Highness to make ready for your departure, for it is now near daybreak, and we should leave with the dawn. I will remain with you, to protect you, while you make your preparations for leaving — and Mr. Egremont will see that the coach is made ready immediately."

"I go to order the coach," said Roger. "Luckily, we are here as we arrived from Mondberg, and my horse-pistol is in the holster of my saddle. A horse-pistol is a powerful persuader under some circumstances. I beg your Highness will excuse me."

The Princess nodded graciously, and Roger went out backward. As he reached the door, he paused, and

The House of Egremont

shaking his fist at the Prince, at Sir Hugo, and at the Countess Bertha, he bawled, —

“O generation of vipers! infernal scoundrels that you are! As for you, Hugo Stein, remember your life is forfeit to me a thousand times over — and prepare you to defend it!”

“I will,” replied Hugo. He was not quite so happy as he had been five minutes before, — his scheme was not working out so well; but he said boldly, “And make you ready, Roger Egremont, to defend your own life; for by God! you will need to.”

“I shall,” replied Roger, “and know you, I fear you not by night or day, with arms or without, on foot or on horseback. And I say to all of you — may God’s vengeance alight on you, and may He in His goodness make me the instrument of it!”

And as he shouted out the words in his rich, full, resonant voice, came through the open door a burst of triumphant music, louder than any that had gone before, as if in applause of Roger Egremont’s words.

He ran at full speed out of the palace, on to the terrace, where a sleepy groom was walking Merrylegs and Berwick’s horse up and down. The air was keen and fresh; the sky was like a great dome of mother-of-pearl, with glints of color radiating from the east where a rosy flush heralded the dawn. Through the open windows came still the long, drawn sweetness of the violins, and the candles flickered palely in the coming of the new day.

Roger jumped on Merrylegs, and giving him the spur galloped off to the palace stables, half a mile away. He roused the sleeping people by beating with his pistol-butt on the great carved doors of the stables. Some faint protest was made when he ordered the state equipage of the Princess.

Captain Egremont acts as Coachman

"Where is your order?" impudently asked the head-groom.

"Here," replied Roger, clapping his pistol to the man's head, "and your order too."

Three men then jumped to do his bidding. Quickly the horses, six handsome chestnuts fresh and eager for the road, were harnessed; Roger stepped upon the lofty box, with its crimson velvet hammer-cloth embroidered in gold, and followed by Merrylegs, his bridle hooked to the footman's strap behind, took the reins, and laying the whip upon the leaders, the coach lurched forward at a tremendous pace.

When at the palace doors, he brought the horses down from a gallop. Michelle and Berwick were standing on the marble steps. A great crowd was assembled, for it had flashed through the palace like lightning that the Princess was about to leave.

Men, pale after their night's revelry, women, painted, patched, and powdered, stood in groups, the cruel light of morning showing them off hideously. Even the musicians, with their instruments in their arms, hovered near the doorways, and servants flocked upon the terrace. Some of these latter were weeping.

The Prince walked up and down the terrace, his sickly face working with passion; tears even dropped down his sallow cheeks. And from a huge bull's-eye over the doorway, Sir Hugo surveyed the scene. He thought himself quite safe until he noted the pistol lying in the box seat of the coach beside Roger, who, catching sight of his half-brother, raised the pistol, and aiming straight at the bull's-eye, fired. Sir Hugo dodged just in time — the glass being shattered with a loud noise.

Michelle wore a black hat, and a large black mantle

The House of Egremont

lined with fur covered her travelling-dress, and in her hand was a box with the jewels she had brought to Orlamunde. Berwick in one hand carried a small port-manteau, while with the other he gracefully assisted Michelle. When she reached the coach, the door of which Berwick respectfully held open for her, some of the servants—those who were weeping—asssembled around the coach-door. To them, Michelle said in a gentle voice,—

“I thank you for your faithful service. You alone at Monplaisir deserve that I should say farewell to you. All of my wardrobe, except a few necessities, I leave behind for you. The division will be made by any one of you whom all may agree in selecting. And say to the poor French artisans in the town that I grieve to leave them unprotected, but if they have any injuries to complain of after I am gone, bid them write to me in the care of His Most Christian Majesty of France. Good-bye, and God bless you.”

The servants bowed low and murmurs arose of—

“Good-bye, your Highness. God preserve your Highness.”

Michelle stepped into the coach, and Berwick shutting the door sprang up behind in the footman's place, throwing at the same time the bridle of Merrylegs and his own horse to two of the men-servants who had been among those at the coach-door. They mounted and followed.

And thus in her coach and six, with an English gentleman of a great and ancient family, for her coachman, and an English duke with royal blood in his veins for her footman, did Michelle, like a princess as she truly said, leave Orlamunde.



ROGER RAISED THE PISTOL AND FIRED

THE
FEDERAL
BUREAU OF
INVESTIGATION
U. S. DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE

CHAPTER XVIII

ROGER EGREMONT HAS HIS LAST FIGHT WITH THE DEVIL

THE Château de la Rivière near Pont-à-Mousson, as Madame de Beaumanoir had said, was but a rookery, so aged and decayed it was. But it was so exquisitely placed, it was so quaint, so remote, so peaceful; the roses, red and white, which climbed all over the gray walls were so fragrant, the purple woods were so darkly beautiful, what wonder that Roger Egremont and Michelle thought it a paradise? For they were there together and alone in the sweetest days of the year, the time of May and roses.

On leaving Orlamunde, Roger had driven straight toward the French frontier. He did not draw rein, and scarcely drew breath until they were beyond Orlamunde, for two men are but two men after all, and Prince Karl could have sent five hundred after them. Arrived at the frontier town, though, and on French soil, they for the first time had leisure to think, to plan, to eat, and to sleep.

Roger left everything to Berwick, and so did Michelle. Berwick, then, promptly decided that the cumbersome coach must be left behind, four out of the six horses sold, and a travelling-chaise purchased. A woman attendant was secured in the little town for Michelle, and it was arranged that Roger should escort her as far as Pont-à-Mousson, where she knew of a

The House of Egremont

religious house she could enter and remain in until she could communicate with her friends at St. Germain. There was no doubt François Delaunay would be sent after her. Roger Egremont, on leaving Michelle at Pont-à-Mousson, was to rejoin Berwick at Strasburg, Berwick meaning not to go too far from Orlamunde until the guns were replaced at Mondberg and Arnheim, and he had got further instructions from the King of France.

And how had Roger Egremont carried out this plan? As basely as Hugo Stein could have done.

Of course, Roger tried to lay it all on fate, on opportunity, on everything except that tendency to evil which dwells in every man's breast. It fell out so, he argued miserably and senselessly to himself. At the very first stage, the woman attendant had repented of her bargain to go to Pont-à-Mousson, and had slipped off secretly in the night. So Roger and Michelle were left without any travelling companion.

There was, however, no time to stop, as Berwick and Roger had agreed that Michelle should be got as far from Orlamunde and as quickly as possible. Michelle suggested that they should make for this old château of la Rivière, only two days' hard travel off, where they could rest a night, get an attendant for her, and press on to Pont-à-Mousson. This seemed the only feasible thing to do; so they set forth from the village where the treacherous attendant had deserted them, and made haste to reach la Rivière. Roger rode Merrylegs, and the post-boys drove Michelle in the chaise.

They reached la Rivière late on the second evening from the frontier. They found an old man and his wife in charge, whom they knocked up at ten o'clock at night. The post-boys were dismissed, old Pierre

Roger's Last Fight with the Devil

cared for the tired horses, and old Marianne made Roger and Michelle decently comfortable in the tumble-down old château. At last they had a breathing spell, and Roger slept in a bed, instead of sitting in a chair in the corridor near Michelle's door, with his hand on his pistol, as he had done for two nights before.

The next morning both of them slept late; the last three days were calculated to try the soul of either man or woman. What wonder was it, then, that when Roger saw how weary and languid Michelle was, he should say to her that she was not fit to travel to Pont-à-Mousson that day, and should rest at la Rivière? So much with a good conscience; but he did not go farther, as a gentleman should, and take horse to Pont-à-Mousson, and fetch her back an attendant on a pillion behind him, so that Michelle should not be without the constant company of a woman. No. The Devil did not need to take him up upon a high mountain, and show him the kingdoms of the earth in order to seduce him from his duty; all the fiend had to do was to picture forth to Roger's imagination the fond delight of a day in May, at that lovely secluded spot, alone with Michelle. Of course, the favorite argument of Satan was used with good effect: it would never be known. And Michelle, who should have asked him to go to Pont-à-Mousson, if he had not so offered, listened to the same argument from the same source. Nay, she was even more casuistical than Roger, and tried to silence her conscience by saying to herself that it was the good God who had given her this one day with the man she loved, as a recompense for five years of torment.

They would certainly go on to Pont-à-Mousson the next day; of that there was no doubt whatever, — so each one declared in secret.

The House of Egremont

Old Marianne gave them some breakfast, and then Michelle, this wearied lady, who was not able to travel in a chaise a day's ride, suddenly recovered her strength and spirits. When Roger said that it was not prudent for her health for her to go farther until the next day, her face became so illumined, she smiled so radiantly, the faint dimple showing in her cheek, that Roger was dazed with joy, and thought the six years since they had made hay in the meadows of St. Germain must be a bad dream. And when he remained silent on the subject of his going to Pont-à-Mousson, Michelle did not so much as once remind him of his duty. She acted as if two or three days of travel could fatigue him completely as it did her — him, Captain Roger Egremont, a campaigner in the Irish Brigade.

After it was tacitly settled between their two pairs of eyes, their tongues taking no part in the debate, that they should spend that day, the loveliest May day ever seen, together and alone at la Rivière, each saw rapture in the face of the other. Roger lay back in his chair on one side of the table where they had been breakfasting, and Michelle lay back in her chair on the other side, and they could no more have helped smiling than they could have stopped breathing.

"'Tis a heavenly day," said Roger. "We must see this sweet spot, — this quaint house, the park; we shall have one whole day together." And there was a note of triumph in his voice.

After breakfast, they started out on their exploring expedition. In the night, Roger had heard the rippling of water over stones; and to their delight they found a beautiful, shallow, clear, little river, tinkling under the windows of an old saloon with its moth-eaten yellow satin furniture. And, oh, surprise of surprises! there

Roger's Last Fight with the Devil

was a stone bridge across the water, — a bridge which some dead and gone Beaumanoir had built for defence; and some other dead and gone Beaumanoir had conceived the notion of building a quaint octagon room on this bridge; and the cushioned window-seats of this room looked down upon the crystal flood of the little river, with its mossy banks. On either side were willows, dipping almost into the water, making dark places where the silver scales of fish glistened.

Michelle — the weary Michelle — walked about this room with the quickest and lightest step imaginable, crying, —

“Look, Roger, look! was ever anything so lovely, so quaint, so delicious? Oh, this place was meant for happiness!”

When she called him Roger, a look of victory came into his eyes, and he took her hand; he drew her to a window-seat, where they sat down together and looked into each other's eyes as they had often longed and never dared to before. And presently they averted their eyes and gazed down upon the bright, unquiet water. The roses, which rioted over everything, had dared to cross the bridge from either side, and a great bold red one audaciously climbed into the very window where they sat, and smiled into the two happy faces there. The birds were singing rapturously; the old place had been so quiet and deserted that the birds felt they owned it, but they did not resent the intrusion of another pair of lovers, — it was the mating time of all. The old room itself was charming. Roger called Michelle's attention to a shelf full of old books; and recognizing a dear friend from whom he had long been parted, he rose and fetched the volume to her. It was Ronsard, — Ronsard, whose poems Roger had recited to her in

The House of Egremont

that never-to-be-forgotten journey, — Ronsard, whose songs he had sung to his guitar. They turned the old, yellow leaves, in quaint black-letter print and antique French, reading a little to each other now and then. There was one little poem about love, and youth, and a sunny sky being all that one could ask in this life. Roger read this to Michelle, and saw her eyes grow dark, and a flush mount to her pale cheek, just as he had seen five years before ; and then, suddenly, he burst out with the story of that other volume of Ronsard, which he had thrown on the camp fire in the Low Countries.

“I burnt it trying to forget you,” he said.

“But you did not forget me,” Michelle replied softly.

It was very wrong. They had begun to have a suspicion that God had nothing in particular to do with their determination to spend that day together, — but it was only a single day. There could be no great harm in one day of each other's society, — so they argued to themselves. Never had they had one whole day of each other's society, and Fate would not soon again be so kind to them. Fate had by that time taken the place of God in the affair. Truly, it was neither God nor Fate, but the devil.

At noonday Marianne gave them a dinner of herbs, which both of them relished as the most delicious meal they had ever eaten, for the same reason that Solomon gave on a similar occasion — there was love therewith. In the afternoon they walked about the small, overgrown, and deserted park and gardens. The place was at all times lonely and secluded, but it had likewise been deserted for many years, and so it gave them a heavenly sense of aloneness. They watched from a moss-grown bench under a great clump of myrtle trees the sun set and the moon rise, and a wind like

Roger's Last Fight with the Devil

velvet softly moved the tender leaves. There were roses all about them, and a nightingale sang in the hedge close by. It was late before they returned; but there was no one to question them or make them afraid. They had both dreamed continuously, during five years past, of the bliss of being together. One day of it had far surpassed all their expectations.

The next morning a soft and silvery rain was falling upon the grateful earth. It was impossible to start in such weather,—so said Roger; and Michelle, averting her eyes, said, Yes; it was impossible. Nevertheless, when the sun flickered out, turning the silver rain to gold, they must both go out in the park to see the lovely, dreamlike beauty of the raining and the shining. Toward afternoon a storm came up, and there was heavy thunder and sharp lightning. Michelle was frightened, and cowered on a moth-eaten sofa in one of the remote saloons. Roger sat by her, comforting her, and gently laughing at her terror. The storm continued until evening, when it settled into a steady downpour. It grew cold, and old Pierre made them a morsel of fire in the fireplace of the little room over the bridge, and brought them a couple of candles, and laid their supper on a round table close to the fire.

The little river was now roaring, swollen by the rain, under their feet.

"There will be no travelling to-morrow," Roger ventured. "The roads will be very heavy. The horses are scarce rested enough to take the road, and, no doubt, all the bridges are washed away."

Most of this was a lie, and Roger remembered the old saying: "Sin has many tools, but a lie is the handle which fits them all." Yes, he was lying, and he knew

The House of Egremont

it — and Michelle knew it; but she wished to hear just such lies as that.

If the day was sweet and intimate, what was the evening, spent with no company but their own and that of their dear Pierre Ronsard? They were as far separated from the rest of the universe as if they were on a planet of their own. There were no words to express their deep delight.

It was late before they parted, and early next morning when they met; and neither on that morning nor any other morning did Roger Egremont — this gentleman who prided himself upon his virgin honor, his life open as day, his reverence for a woman's name and fame — propose to the Princess of Orlamunde, a wife fugitive from her husband and intrusted to his care, to proceed one step upon her way. And Michelle — this woman whose path had been like that of a star — trembled every day, when the sun rose, lest Roger should say, "Come, we must be going."

As if it were not enough that they had long felt themselves born for each other, they discovered in this daily companionship a multitude and variety of intellectual gifts in common, and their tastes seemed to coincide to a miracle. All the things which Roger Egremont had loved during his whole life, and had never expected to find any human being to sympathize fully with, he discovered Michelle also loved and understood. Neither one of them, in their wildest dreaming, had imagined how entirely each would suffice for the other. They never had a weary or dull moment. There was nothing, from politics and campaigning to the harvesting of wheat, in which Michelle did not prove an intelligent companion. In some things, in the politics of Europe, for example, she was better informed than

Roger's Last Fight with the Devil

Roger was ; but she used her knowledge so gracefully and discreetly that it did not ever offend his masculine self-love. She was, by far, the most intellectual woman he had ever known ; and besides all her gifts and graces, she had, in perfection, all those delicate reserves which a woman should have, the want of which had always shocked Roger in poor Bess Lukens. Although every hour she remained at la Rivière Michelle risked her name and fame, yet did she as scrupulously observe etiquette as if she had been living in the palace of Versailles, with two thousand pairs of critical eyes fixed on her. When Roger, one day, tried to converse with her as she stood at her bedroom window, she shut the window in his face, and sharply rated him afterward for his impropriety. On the night of their arrival, old Marianne had given him a bed in a dark closet of a room, next her own, and he could only reach it either by going outside or going through old Marianne's room. He would have dearly liked one of the pleasant rooms in the upper part of the building, but he never had the courage to suggest changing his wretched quarters, well knowing that he would not be allowed to. Never did two people more strictly observe all the outward canons of decorum than these two lovers, shut up together in that lonely, sweet place ; and never did two people place themselves in a position where this decorum would be more incredulously received if they should assert it.

Every day they spent together the devil provided them with some new source of pleasure. In a dark cupboard Roger found an old viol de gamba. He glued it together, restrung it, and found in it endless pleasure. To it he sang those love songs which made Michelle's eyes shine like stars. And then — oh, joy, discovering that Michelle had some knowledge of the viol, he taught

The House of Egremont

her the accompaniments. She was quick to learn, but she ever seemed to need more teaching, and then — their hands and eyes met. And Roger, giving poignant meaning to all those burning words, sang as she played, watching the color come and go in her cheek. Then there were long afternoons spent in the woods, hunting the wild roses, which bloomed late in those ferny depths. And there were long, sweet moonlit evenings, when the nightingales sang to them as they walked up and down the terrace, under the quivering aspen leaves, which made black shadows on the white earth. Oh, how keen was their joy!

Even their homeliest wants brought with them charm and amusement and pleasure. Roger gave old Pierre a long string of names, such as Chief Steward, Master of the Horse, Groom of the Chambers, and Cellarer. Michelle called Marianne her Lady-in-Waiting, Mistress of the Robes, and femme de chambre.

There was some antiquated table furniture found in the cupboards and closets of the old château, but there was only one porcelain teacup. Over this teacup Roger and Michelle made merry, squabbled like children, and had endless amusement. They even had that luxury of luxuries — a lovers' quarrel. Roger, setting a trap in the woods, as he had often done when a lad at Egremont, caught a hare. Michelle insisted that he should set it free; Roger declared it would make excellent soup. He released the little creature at last, but he showed some temper and crossness in the doing; Michelle grew cold to him, and they had the pleasure of quarrelling and the rapture of reconciliation.

Their quiet, intimate talk, day by day, covered many subjects, and avoided others. Neither spoke of the past except in connection with the other. Especially did

Roger's Last Fight with the Devil

they wish that the memory of the last five unhappy years should be lost in oblivion, as a prisoner would drop his manacles into the ocean, never to be seen or heard of again. And into that same ocean, they felt, as every day they spent together passed, that a pearl had been dropped.

They did not speak of the future at all, nor indeed suffer themselves so much as to think of it. For them there was neither past nor future, — only the present hour; and the golden glow of each hour together eclipsed all that had gone before, and made them careless as to what was to come afterward.

But in the midst of this deep delight, were they happy? No! a thousand times no! They were not guilty, but before them always yawned an abyss, — an abyss into which each might plunge the other. And already, as far as the verdict of the world might go, they were lost in this abyss. Roger had agreed to take upon himself the charge of Michelle, from an honorable man like Berwick. How could he meet Berwick's eye again? He positively trembled and broke out in a cold sweat when he thought of it; and that was but a part of what he had to fear. And Michelle — for her husband's sins against her might be shed the blood of honest men; her King and benefactor might take vengeance for her wrongs; and what would be his position in the eyes of the world, when it came out, where and how and with whom she had passed her time since leaving Orlamunde? Many nights this thought drove her from her bed, and Roger, awake too, and fighting with his conscience, would hear above him her light step, as she walked the floor in her anguish.

Neither of them had ever tried living without the approval of the conscience; for, whatever wrong and

The House of Egremont

folly Michelle had committed at Orlamunde, she was just enough to herself to know she had not committed it wilfully, or willingly, or wantonly; she had been driven to it by the gang of miscreants who had surrounded her. But no one forced her to remain at la Rivière; she stayed because she had neither the wish nor the will to leave it—and she dared not think much on this; that way, madness lay.

And so it was with Roger Egremont. His honor was as his life, and he was now living in defiance of it. In many ways this new conduct of his, new because it was base, affected him strangely. He had been wont to ride abroad, to see and speak with his fellow-men. Now he would not go near the highway, albeit there was no danger of his being recognized; he did not want to see the face of any of his kind, except Michelle. Even the occasional presence of old Pierre and Marianne was often distasteful to him.

There were no houses nor even a peasant's hut in sight from the windows, but on a neighboring hill was a little old church. It could not be seen, but the sound of the church bell could be heard; a singularly rich and sonorous bell, which some echo of the neighboring hillsides repeated with beautiful effect. When, at morning and evening, this bell set up its melodious clangor, Michelle always turned pale,—it seemed to be an accusing voice. Roger, on those occasions, would snatch up the viol and sing to it some merry chansonette—perhaps that gay song which so often rang out at the inn of Michot.

“Amis, passons-le gaiement!”

But it made a discord, a horrid discord, with that deep and serene music—that clear, angelic call to prayer and repentance of the bell.

Roger's Last Fight with the Devil

It may, in short, be judged how happy they were in the Paradise of their own seeking, when it is told that Roger, after a while, began to be haunted by a dreadful apprehension about Michelle; he lived in terror that she might, some delicious day, or some wretched night, throw herself into the river. Something in her eyes, when she heard the sound of the church bell, frightened him. And on those nights when she walked the floor all night, he came, after a time, to rise, and open his outer door, which looked on to the little brawling stream, so that if he should see a white figure fluttering down, he could save it. And something of the same idea came to Michelle.

One day, sitting in the bridge-room, she inadvertently spoke of Berwick.

They had tacitly avoided talking of persons, because if these persons were good, Roger Egremont and the Princess of Orlamunde would be scorned by them; and if bad, this gentleman and lady would be reckoned fit company for them. But on this day Michelle, for once forgetting where she stood, talked of Berwick. She glanced at Roger, and saw that his face had turned pale under his tan and sunburn. She stopped at once, and a painful silence came between them, broken by Roger's saying, in a tremulous voice, —

“Some day, I shall have to meet Berwick — and then —”

He rose and literally fled from the room. Presently she heard a noise below, and looking out of the window, saw Roger, in the doorway of his wretched chamber, hammering at his horse-pistol. She too ran out of the room, but when she came within his sight as she turned *the corner of the building*, she walked sedately enough.

The House of Egremont

folly Michelle had committed at Orlamunde, she was just enough to herself to know she had not committed it wilfully, or willingly, or wantonly; she had been driven to it by the gang of miscreants who had surrounded her. But no one forced her to remain at la Rivière; she stayed because she had neither the wish nor the will to leave it—and she dared not think much on this; that way, madness lay.

And so it was with Roger Egremont. His honor was as his life, and he was now living in defiance of it. In many ways this new conduct of his, new because it was base, affected him strangely. He had been wont to ride abroad, to see and speak with his fellow-men. Now he would not go near the highway, albeit there was no danger of his being recognized; he did not want to see the face of any of his kind, except Michelle. Even the occasional presence of old Pierre and Marianne was often distasteful to him.

There were no houses nor even a peasant's hut in sight from the windows, but on a neighboring hill was a little old church. It could not be seen, but the sound of the church bell could be heard; a singularly rich and sonorous bell, which some echo of the neighboring hill-sides repeated with beautiful effect. When, at morning and evening, this bell set up its melodious clangor, Michelle always turned pale,—it seemed to be an accusing voice. Roger, on those occasions, would snatch up the viol and sing to it some merry chansonette—perhaps that gay song which so often rang out at the inn of Michot.

“Amis, passons-le gaiement!”

But it made a discord, a horrid discord, with that deep and serene music—that clear, angelic call to prayer and repentance of the bell.

Roger's Last Fight with the Devil

It may, in short, be judged how happy they were in the Paradise of their own seeking, when it is told that Roger, after a while, began to be haunted by a dreadful apprehension about Michelle; he lived in terror that she might, some delicious day, or some wretched night, throw herself into the river. Something in her eyes, when she heard the sound of the church bell, frightened him. And on those nights when she walked the floor all night, he came, after a time, to rise, and open his outer door, which looked on to the little brawling stream, so that if he should see a white figure fluttering down, he could save it. And something of the same idea came to Michelle.

One day, sitting in the bridge-room, she inadvertently spoke of Berwick.

They had tacitly avoided talking of persons, because if these persons were good, Roger Egremont and the Princess of Orlamunde would be scorned by them; and if bad, this gentleman and lady would be reckoned fit company for them. But on this day Michelle, for once forgetting where she stood, talked of Berwick. She glanced at Roger, and saw that his face had turned pale under his tan and sunburn. She stopped at once, and a painful silence came between them, broken by Roger's saying, in a tremulous voice, —

"Some day, I shall have to meet Berwick — and then —"

He rose and literally fled from the room. Presently she heard a noise below, and looking out of the window, saw Roger, in the doorway of his wretched chamber, hammering at his horse-pistol. She too ran out of the room, but when she came within his sight as she turned the corner of the building, she walked sedately enough.

The House of Egremont

he let Michelle go away,—for after that last meeting, he felt sure she would make some sort of a struggle to leave him,—or should he make her stay? He was torn with agony between these two thoughts. He had always found some comfort before in the silent companionship of his mother, Nature, but she had no consolation for him in this. He saw the moon rise and sink, and the faint glory of the dawn, and he was farther away from a resolve than he had been when he had first wrestled with himself. Suddenly, it was just at five o'clock on a June morning, he heard the church bell again. It was like a voice from Heaven. It cast him upon his knees on the green earth, in the forest, to ask for light and help, and instantly light and help came to him. He would spare the woman he loved. He had loved her with a true and honorable love, and true and honorable should his love remain. He adored God and thanked Him for His mercy in bringing His unworthy servant to a knowledge of sin. For the first time since his boyhood he wept, wept tears of penitence and of thankfulness, and those burning drops washed his soul and made it clean again. The bell continued its sweet chiming; it sounded to Roger Egremont like the pæans of angels rejoicing over one sinner doing penance.

He rose presently to his feet, and walked rapidly back to the château. He was once more Roger Egremont, a gentleman. He was humbled when he reflected that twice in his life he had come within a frightful chance of utterly losing himself,—the miserable time when he was first cast into Newgate, and the delicious hours he had spent at la Rivière. He promised that, having been so great a sinner himself, he would never look with anything but pity on the greatest sinner that walked the earth.

Roger's Last Fight with the Devil

As he made his way toward the château, his acute and practical mind began to work out the actual solution of the entanglements he had brought on Michelle and himself. He would see her as soon as she arose. He would take, as he deserved, all the blame upon himself for the cruel position in which he had placed her, and humbly beg her pardon as he had begged that of his Maker. He felt sure of her forgiveness and of her love. They might never be united, but neither could ever doubt the other. They would, of course, devise an immediate plan for leaving la Rivière. He would probably go straight to Pont-à-Mousson, to the religious house of which she had spoken before they had reached la Rivière; she had never so much as mentioned it to him since. He would make a frank confession to the Mother Superior, who was sure to be a discreet woman and kindly. So much was due her, and with her help it would be easy enough to keep quiet the time—thirty-seven days; he knew the exact number—which Michelle had spent at la Rivière. After taking Michelle to Pont-à-Mousson, he would join Berwick. He divined that Michelle would exact that he should confess all to Berwick, and that, as a man of honor, he was prepared to do.

When he reached the château, he thought he had never seen the old gray pile so lovely, so inviting, as in the dewy freshness of the morning. He stopped under Michelle's window, and his aspiration was like a prayer. It was still so early that he thought he would snatch an hour's sleep; he began to feel the fatigue which follows upon many hours of exhausting emotions, and going to his dingy little room, he threw himself, dressed, upon his bed and instantly fell into a delicious slumber. He thought he had slept but

The House of Egremont

an hour, when he waked and tumbled out of bed. As he opened the door leading outward, sunshine flooded the room, and he saw that it was near noon. Cursing himself for a sluggard, he glanced involuntarily at Michelle's window. It was closed, nor was the window in the bridge-room open.

A deadly presentiment struck his heart. Instead of going into the château and calling softly for Michelle, as he usually did when he did not see her, he called loudly for Marianne. The old woman was long in coming, but presently she appeared.

"Where is the Princess Michelle?" he asked.

"Gone," coolly replied the old Marianne. "She left a letter for you, which, however, I am not to give you until to-night."

Roger seized her roughly.

"Give me that letter instantly," he shouted in her ear.

Old Marianne was obstinate.

"You may strike me if you like, but I will not give you the letter an hour before my lady told me," she answered, doggedly.

And Roger Egremont, this honorable gentleman, whose creed was gentleness to women, who had gone to sleep a penitent man, resolving to do right even if it required the crucifixion of the soul, fell into the most unseemly passion imaginable. The devil in a man dies hard, and even after he is conquered he can give much trouble. Roger Egremont, this strong, weather-beaten man, was unnerved and unstrung by the strain of furious emotions from which he had suffered the whole night, and these words of Marianne's seemed altogether unbearable to him. He began to storm and swear frightfully at her; he did everything, this chivalrous Captain Egremont,

Roger's Last Fight with the Devil

but strike the poor old woman. Nay, in his eagerness to find the letter, he rushed into her poverty-stricken room; he turned her poor belongings upside down, threw her few wretched sticks of furniture about, and behaved like a ruffian and a madman. Such is human nature at its worst, even in an honest man, when he is cruelly balked. But he could not find the letter. He then condescended to beg. He offered the old woman half the money he had, all of it, if only she would give him the letter. But his previous conduct had aroused all the doggedness in an obstinate nature. Marianne would not give him the letter.

And Pierre had gone, and the chaise and the post-horses. He easily tracked them to the front of the château. Yes, there was the very imprint of Michelle's delicate feet in the mossy earth. She had got into the chaise at the foot of the terrace, and the wheel tracks passed through the park, and into the highroad, half a mile away. Then they were lost.

He had some wild idea of mounting his horse and pursuing Michelle — but where? He knew nothing of the country, and could have no inkling of the direction she had taken. No. In the midst of his wildness he realized that the only thing to do was to wait for the letter.

He returned to the château as nearly mad as a sane man could be. To desert him in that manner! Had she, then, ever truly loved him? Yesterday — last night — this morning — what answer would his heart have given him? But now — He struck his forehead and swore to himself that she had never, never loved him.

He had a dreadful conviction that the thing was final with her; and going all over the château, and wandering amid the grounds was like going to the old familiar

The House of Egremont

places the day that the one who made them bright has been laid in the earth. Yes, — this was the very spot in the bridge-room where they had sat the evening before. Not even the chair had been moved in which he had sat when she knelt before him, and her hair had fallen upon his shoulder. On the window-seat lay her embroidery, just as her hand had dropped it. Close to it lay the volume of Ronsard. The place they had last read was marked with some rose leaves; she had gathered them from the bold marauder whose lovely face had laughed in at the window — and those leaves were not yet withered.

In the old saloon was the viol. Roger had thrown it down carelessly on a table. Michelle, with a woman's orderly instinct, had put it in its case, and carefully closed it. That had been only twenty-hours before.

These things almost broke his heart. As sunset approached he went back to the bridge-room and sullenly threw himself into the same chair in which he had sat when last he saw Michelle vanish through the door. It came to him that there was something like farewell in that last long look, and the memory of it softened him. Love was in her eyes; the mere recollection of that look was convincing. Dwelling upon it, he fell into a better frame of mind, and gradually he came to his other self. And when the evening shadows lay upon the land, and the dying light wrapped all the earth in its soft, mysterious splendor, and the unseen bell echoed sweetly from the hill, Roger Egremont, changed and melted, cried out aloud in his agitation, "Michelle, Michelle, forgive me! Forgive me, Michelle!"

As if in answer to this, her letter was thrown in to him at the window. This is it, —

Roger's Last Fight with the Devil

"You will know why I went secretly, and why I have caused you to spend this day of misery. If I had once seen you, I never could have left you. I go to Pont-à-Mousson. I shall be there when you receive this letter. Forgive me, dearest. But for me, we should not have remained a single day at la Rivière. It is I, and I alone who am to blame; and the greatest blame of all is that I should have made you, the soul of honor, act dishonorably. For that I implore your forgiveness. I ask you to confess all to the Duke of Berwick. I feel sure that he can save you from the consequences of my wrong-doing. I shall confess to the Mother Superior where I am going. This is not to save myself, but you — for I assure you I care not what becomes of me.

"We can never meet again — that much is certain."

Here some illegible words followed, and then her name.

Five weeks afterward, as Berwick was sitting in the garden of the Swan Inn at Strasburg one evening, he saw Roger Egremont approaching on Merrylegs. Roger dismounted, and Berwick went forward to greet him. He looked worn and tired, — so much so that Berwick asked him if he had been ill. No, he had not been ill: he would tell all as soon as he had had some supper, — he had ridden hard that day.

After supper he proposed to Berwick to walk into the country. Berwick knew then that the story of his mysterious absence and silence would be told.

He told it all, without reservation; only, he tried to give out the idea that he had detained Michelle against her will at la Rivière. But he was truly penitent and had obtained her forgiveness. Through the Mother Superior at Pont-à-Mousson, everything would appear quite right for Michelle, and Roger merely told Ber-

The House of Egremont

wick because he felt he had behaved extremely ill, and had miserably betrayed the trust reposed in him.

Berwick was a shrewd man. He did not believe any man could have detained Michelle at la Rivière. She had gone away in the post-chaise as soon as she was ready. He suspected the exact state of the case, and while he blamed them justly, he pitied the two poor unhappy souls. He said nothing, but after a while held out his hand in a friendly grasp to Roger, — they were standing still by the roadside then. Roger had never expected Berwick to take his hand again. That hand-clasp was the gratefulest one he had ever known in his life.

On returning to the inn Berwick produced two letters which he had been holding for Roger. One was from Dicky, — a mere line saying he was well, and hoped to be soon ordered to England. It was two months old. The second was only three weeks old, and was from Bess Lukens. Something in the letter itself, — hurried and giving no signs of that elaborate care which half-educated persons like poor Bess bestow upon their rare letters — alarmed Roger. It was written from Paris the first of July, and said briefly, —

I have just had news that Mr. Richard is taken in England, and is in Newgate prison under sentence of death. I don't know what his superiors, as he calls them, were thinking about to let the poor lad go. I got the news at St. Germain's last night, through Mr. François Delanay. He came with me to Paris at daylight and we are now taking coach for Calais; for I am going to England to try and save the lad. I have a plenty of money with me, and I know Newgate prison better than the man that built it; and I have an old friend there besides, — Diggory Hutchinson, as you may remember. I will write you as

Roger's Last Fight with the Devil

soon as I get to London. There might n't be any trouble in getting Mr. Richard's sentence commuted, if he was not a Jesuit; but they hanged the others, Sir John Fenwick and the rest of them, and 't is not likely they will spare a Jesuit. But there are ways of cheating the gallows, that I know, and you may yet see Mr. Richard's merry face and hear him play his fiddle. So good-bye and no more at present.

From your faithful friend,

BESS LUKENS.

CHAPTER XIX

IF A MAN GIVETH HIS LIFE FOR HIS FRIENDS, HE
CAN DO NO MORE

IT was at the inn of Michot that Bess Lukens had heard the dreadful news about Dicky Egremont. She had gone to St. Germain's to spend the Sunday with her friend, Madame Michot. Saturday evening was now the one gay evening in the week at the inn, when it recovered some of its pristine splendor. The common room was quite full, punch was brewing, and there was an occasional burst of song.

"But it is not what it was five years ago," sighed Madame Michot to Bess, who sat by her on the little platform by the large door, with the writing-table and the grille, looking into the great room.

Madame Michot, taking advantage of Bess's presence to look after the kitchen administration, left her to preside at the bureau. Bess, who was, as usual, very handsomely dressed, looked quite regal in Madame Michot's great chair, on her improvised throne.

She found some of her acquaintances among those who came to pay their score, — more paid in cash than in the old days, — and each of the gentlemen passed Mademoiselle Luccheni a compliment, which Bess returned in kind. Many inquired how the merry war progressed between the Abbé d'Albret and herself; at which Bess showed all her rosy dimples and white teeth, and replied that she understood the Abbé was ailing, —

If a Man Giveth His Life

going into a decline, fretted thereto by Mademoiselle Luccheni. The evening was far spent, when the door opened, and François Delaunay, looking as neat and as pious as usual, entered.

A chorus of welcome greeted him; gentlemen inquiring how the Duchess did; and was he out on parole; and what time was he obliged to report; and other remarks indicating his condition of servitude. To all this, François replied goodnaturedly, and then turned to greet Bess.

"Sit you down there," said Bess, pointing to a footstool which François placed on the step of the platform, bringing his head on a level with Bess's waist, "and I'll let you see, Mr. François," she continued, "that I can look the duchess as well as that old Beaumanoir woman, — no offence meant. How is she?"

François shook his head dolefully.

"Very gay. Plays incessantly, and will have me to play and drink. She complained of me to-night that I had never been really drunk since I had lived in her house; and when I would have spent the evening quietly, with my books and my writing-book, she fairly drove me out of the house, to have some adventures and come back and tell her. So I came to the inn of Michot."

"I am afraid," said Bess, shaking her head solemnly, "by what she said about your never being drunk, that she suspects the game you have been practising on her, playing drunk."

"I suspect she does, too. Oh," cried François, in a burst of confidence, "if I were but free and independent, if I had but a thousand francs a year, I would lead the life I desire, — books and science, and, perhaps, take orders."

The House of Egremont

dashed after her ; but Bess waved her back, and seizing the bed-curtain, drew it back. As she did so, Madame de Beaumanoir, who was in the bed, uttered a piercing shriek, and disappeared under the bedclothes. This conduct, so astonishing on Madame de Beaumanoir's part, staggered Bess ; but she held her ground stoutly.

The maid then began adding her screams to Madame de Beaumanoir's, —

“Go away ! go away ! Madame wishes you to leave the room at once ! For God's sake, go ! ”

Bess, more and more amazed, still declined to budge. Madame de Beaumanoir, under the bedclothes, continued to emit shrieks ; but the maid, ceasing her noise, ran to a chiffonier, and taking from it a wig and a set of Paris teeth, returned to the bed, motioning frantically to Bess, upon whom light began to break.

“I will go into the anteroom for five minutes,” she said, loftily ; “but I shall return at the end of that time, as I am compelled to see Madame the Duchess.”

With this, she marched out. Five minutes later, when she came back into the bedroom, Madame de Beaumanoir was sitting up majestically in bed, a full set of very white teeth in her mouth, her cheeks reddened, and a wig on her head, though in the haste of preparation, the maid had clapped the wig on before removing the night-cap. But Madame de Beaumanoir, serenely unconscious, and with her stateliest air, said :

“Pray, pardon my agitation ; but I was much alarmed at having my bed-curtains pulled open, and seeing a stranger at my bedside.”

Bess, in the midst of her distress, could not but smile, but she only said, —

“I did not know I was so alarming. However,” she added, gravely, “your Ladyship's Grace must know

If a Man Giveth His Life

that only something of the most pressing nature would induce me to rouse you at this hour. It is to tell you the desperate news concerning D— I mean Mr. Richard Egremont, the Jesuit priest. He is now in Newgate prison under sentence of death. I take horses for Paris this night on my way to London to see if he can be saved. I know that hateful prison well, and if I have money enough I may be able to get him out of that place and out of England. I have some money in Paris, — a thousand livres, — but I know not if that will be enough. You once told me — that day upon the terrace long ago — that if I wanted a service to come to you. Now I come to you to redeem that promise. I want more money — much money — all the money you can lay your hands on to-night — to help me save Mr. Richard Egremont from the gallows. If I live I will pay it back, whether I can save his life or no.”

Madame de Beaumanoir looked at Bess, as she deliberately uttered this.

“I know a good deal about you, Lukens,” she said, condescendingly; “you want some money immediately. You shall have all that I can command at this moment. I scarcely know young Egremont, but I know his cousin, Mr. Roger Egremont, and I knew all that family in days past.”

She motioned to the maid, who brought her a dressing-case; from it she took some gold and notes.

“Here,” she said, “are about twelve hundred livres. Take them and try to save the poor lad. I cannot bear the thought of a good-looking Englishman being hanged. There are too few of them anyway. François shall take you to Paris to-night.”

Bess put the money into the pocket of her gown, and then, stooping over, surprised Madame de Beauma-

The House of Egremont

money, however, was mostly in notes, and those were very artfully concealed in her stockings.

And so saying, she stepped into the chaise, and was soon bowling along rapidly to London.

Her thoughts on the way were anxious, but not wholly gloomy. She relied on her money and on her knowledge of the prison to get Dicky out. And she knew him to be so intelligent and so familiar with England that once out of prison he could escape detection almost anywhere, and as soon as the hubbub of his disappearance had quieted down, it would be easy enough to smuggle him across the water. The whole of the day was consumed in the journey, and it was past nightfall on a soft July night when her chaise rolled under the dark and forbidding archway of Newgate she so well remembered. It seemed darker and blacker to her than ever, and the grimy lantern that swung overhead was like a sinister eye in an evil face.

There was a main door, which was bolted and barred, but a little way off was a small door, opening, as it were, into a cellar. Bess went straight to this little door, and beat a thundering rat-tat-tat upon it. In a moment it was opened, showing her a dismal little room, in which sat Diggory Hutchinson, looking not a day older than he was when he so awkwardly sued for Bess's favor, seven years before.

"You don't know me, Diggory," said Bess with a bright smile, walking forward into the light from a couple of tallow candles.

Truly, Diggory knew her, and yet did not know her. Was this modish creature, with her silk mantle, her embroidered hood, her fan at her side, and a jewel in her stomacher, old Tim Lukens's niece? Diggory tried to reconstruct her as he remembered her, — in her coarse

If a Man Giveth His Life

stuff gown, and clumsy shoes, with her shapely arms showing below her short sleeves. But it was vain. There were two Bess Lukenses, and to this one he was stranger, and was a little afraid of her.

"Come, man," cried Bess, "I am here on important business, and I want you to keep it quiet. Are there any Jesuit gentlemen here?"

"Yes," answered Diggory, still disconcerted. "Mr. Richard Egremont, — a cousin to him as was Mr. Roger Egremont, that you remembers."

"That's all I want to know," replied Bess, cheerfully, surprised that she should have found her man so easily, and found him alive. "Now, like a good man, don't go rousing the place. I know you need not. I know how Newgate is conducted, bad luck to it, and you won't be for getting me in any trouble, now, will you? That's a good Diggory."

She had stepped up close to Diggory, and had put one strong, well-shaped hand upon his arm, and looked into his eyes with a frank, compelling gaze. Many men and women stronger and better than poor Diggory Hutchinson had succumbed to the natural charm of that glance and that touch, so he only said, —

"I'll not be getting you in any trouble if you don't get into it yourself."

"Of course, Diggory," continued Bess, in a wheedling voice. "You'll not turn me in the street this time of night. Sure, you'll let me sleep in a cell, without telling anybody, and if you will agree to let me stay I'll tell you what I came for."

"In course," replied Diggory, still very much puzzled. Not having seen Bess during the period of her metamorphosis, he was naturally the more struck with the change. She was so exquisitely handsome, and so well

The House of Egremont

dressed, and in addition to her old good-naturedly hectoring way, she had a subtle note of command in her voice, and a pleasant look of authority in her eye. Diggory was at a loss to know what had turned Bess Lukens into this dazzling creature.

"You must know, my good Diggory," said Bess, in a condescending tone, "that I have been in France these last seven years, and I have spoke so much French that if I fall into it now and then, you'll not be surprised. I am one of the singers at the King's Opera in Paris."

"I remembers," said Diggory, "thou wert always a-singing and a-trilling. You always made a mighty noise."

Bess smiled with the air of a gracious princess on Diggory. "Singing is well paid, my good lad, if one can sing well enough."

"Are you married, Bess?" asked Diggory, after a pause.

"No, and I have no mind to be. There is enough trouble in this life to give everybody a plenty, and I don't want to increase my share of it by marrying. But if I could ever marry anybody, it would be an Englishman. I love the French *en masse*, that means the whole of 'em, but I am not for marrying any one of em."

Diggory took this as a personal compliment, and grinned, and then Bess, abruptly turning the conversation, said, "And when is Mr. Dicky Egremont to be tried?"

"He don't need to be tried no more," calmly replied Diggory. "He were tried and convicted once, and that's enough. He were resented day before yesterday, and he is to be hanged to-morrow morning, by six of the clock."

At these dreadful words, uttered in the cool and

If a Man Giveth His Life

matter-of-fact manner of a prison keeper, Bess started from her chair, clasped her hands, and stood mute and stunned with horror. Diggory, hardened to all the frightful scenes of a gaoler's life, looked quietly at her face, suddenly grown pallid, at her dilating eyes, at her tall and graceful figure, first rigid with the shock of what she had heard, and then trembling violently.

She could not speak, but motioned him to go on. Diggory, to whom Dicky Egremont was no more and no less than one of many Jesuit gentlemen who had walked calmly into the prison and calmly out again to the gal-lows, could think of nothing else to say but to repeat :

"He was resented 'o Monday, that was day before yesterday ; and he is to be hanged o' Thursday, that's to-morrow." Then, seeing in Bess's wild white face a look of agonized inquiry, he continued, with the best possible intentions,—

"The Jesuit gentlemen, you know, is always quartered afore they 're dead. Ketch, the hangman, wanted me to turn his 'prentice, and was a-going to show me on a calf, but I had n't no stomach for it."

The dingy room swam before Bess, and the two miserable candles danced up and down. A vision passed before her of Dicky, lying on the ground, — she knew all about it, although she had never seen an execution. Diggory, after a pause, spoke again. "Them Jesuits is hard to kill. One of 'em when I was a boy held out for half an hour after he was cut open. He set up on the ground and made that papist sign like this here." Diggory crossed himself. "He were a handsome old man too, and one of the gentry. A duke come to see him afore he was hanged. 'Tis no telling how long they 'll live after they are cut down." Suddenly Bess's strong self-control gave way. She

The House of Egremont

uttered a loud and piercing scream; her voice, always clear, melodious, and penetrating, echoed through the stone archways and corridors of the vast building, like the death cry of music itself. Diggory, at this, flew at her, stopping her mouth with his palm, and Bess sunk on a chair.

"Hush! hush!" he cried. "They'll catch you and I'll lose my place, I will."

There was a deep silence afterward. Bess's mind was in a tumult, while Diggory listened for coming footsteps.

"Nobody's coming," he said, after five minutes had passed. "They think it's some o' the prisoners. Oftentimes they screams like that, — we don't take no notice unless they has a regular spell of it."

"Diggory," gasped Bess after a while, "you ever had a good heart. Take me to Mr. Egremont's cell. I know you have a pass-key. Diggory, I will give you this jewel, I swear I will, if you will but let me see Mr. Egremont."

She unfastened with trembling fingers the brooch from her breast, and pressed it in his hand.

"I don't want nothing," said Diggory, bashfully. "I know, and you know, Bess, that it's worth my place, and maybe something worse, to let you into Mr. Egremont's cell to-night, — but I'll do it. Howsomedever, I must go and see the guard first."

Bess handed him all the gold and paper money she could find in her purse. "Use it all, — and I have more, — only let me see Mr. Egremont this night."

Diggory went out, closing and locking the door after him. Bess sat trembling with horror. She had been frightened about Dicky, — she feared that he would get himself in trouble, as Roger had done, — but that it would come to this, she had not fully expected. It

If a Man Giveth His Life

seemed hours before Diggory returned; in truth it was but little more than twenty minutes.

"Come," he said, in a low voice, "and don't make not the least bit of noise."

Bess rose, and Diggory, blowing out the candles, led the way to the corridor, and then downward to a cellar. For the first time in her life, physical weakness almost overcame Bess Lukens. In their stealthy progress along dark and unused passages and cellars, through dismal corridors and noisome courts, she often had to stop and lean, half fainting, on Diggory. At last they reached a narrow stair, at the top of which was a cell, with a lantern in it, and a stone bench. Here Diggory left Bess, and after a moment another door silently opened, and in walked Dicky Egremont.

He was handcuffed, but otherwise had no fetters or chains,—and was fully dressed in a shabby cassock, and had his beretta on his head, from which his short, curling light hair escaped. Never had Bess seen his pleasant, boyish face more calm and smiling.

"How good this is of you, dear Bess," he said, and took her hand.

But Bess, albeit mindful of Diggory's warning to make no noise, was sobbing convulsively, and trying to stifle her sobs in her mantle. She could not speak, but Dicky could, in his usual soft and artless voice.

"Come," he said, "you have done me the greatest service in the world by coming to me, and I think you must have run an extra hazard,—and now you sob so you can neither speak nor hear me. 'T is no way to do." But Bess could only sob and sob for a while longer, Dicky waiting patiently meanwhile. Presently, under the spell of his composure, she grew calm.

"True," *she* whispered, "I have my whole life to cry

The House of Egremont

in, — and only a little while to be with thee. But, oh, Dicky, cannot money get thee out of this? I have a plenty, — my own and Madame de Beaumanoir's, — and I know this place well, — and Diggory Hutchinson, the turnkey, is my friend."

"No Bess. 'Tis useless. Perhaps a week ago — but not now. However, 'tis no matter. Better men than I have died as I shall die to-morrow morning. I am no hero, — but I hope I can die as becomes a priest and a gentleman."

"Tell me all," said Bess, still trembling convulsively, "that I may take it back to France, — to those that love you, — to poor Roger."

"Yes," replied Dicky, his bright eyes moistening a little. "I should like Roger, whom I love best of any person in the world, to know how I came to this pass. Well, to make a long story short, I got the mission to England, although every one of my countrymen in the Society of Jesus was on file as eager to go. I came as a strolling fiddler, and was safe enough for a time. I even lay in the village of Egremont several days and nights. You have no notion, Bess!" cried Dicky, his tone growing animated, "how I liked my fiddler's life. You see, it was mostly in the open air, — and it was so sweet to be in English fields and woods again, and to be at Egremont!"

There was a kind of rapture in his voice.

"How you and Roger do love Egremont!" sighed Bess, — she had said it many times before.

"Yes, we are simple about it, I think. But, Bess, that last week of freedom was the very happiest of my life. Was it not good of God to give me so much happiness — and the very sort I would have asked — at the very last?"

If a Man Giveth His Life

"No!" cried Bess, in whom nature was ever stronger than grace. "It is not good of God to let you be murdered, — to —"

Bess stopped; something in Dicky's eye compelled her.

"And then," said Dicky, resuming where he had left off, "it was so good to play my fiddle as much as I liked. You see, Bess, at the seminary there were more serious things to do; and I never could manage to have the company of my dear fiddle for more than half an hour in the day. The Superior made me play the great organ in church, — but I never loved it like my fiddle. And I played English tunes all the time, except once, at the very last; and I was confused, and played 'Les Folies en Espagne,' and that was the beginning of my being discovered." And then, actually laughing, Dicky said, "Tell that to Madame de Beaumanoir."

Bess, with tears dropping down her pale face, motioned him to go on.

"As I tell you, I was a whole week in and about Egremont, baptizing and administering the sacraments, and saying mass between midnight and dawn. I grew a beard, and no one knew me. I did not, however, spend every night with the Catholic villagers, for fear it might arouse suspicion. Sometimes I lay at taverns, paying for my supper by my fiddling; and when I stayed with the farmer lads, I was up with the dawn and in the fields, working for my dinner; and at the noontime I would play while the rustics danced, — it did me good to see their simple joyousness, and oftentimes I felt like jumping up and shaking a leg, and fiddling too. And in truth, Bess," here Dicky blushed, "I actually did it once or twice, from pure joy at finding myself at Egremont once more, with the honest people there, and the sun

The House of Egremont

shining so merrily. I pitied poor Roger when I should have to tell him how sweet the whole place looked. The oak avenue is gone, but I never saw such sward anywhere as at Egremont, nor such delicious air. And such excellent eggs and milk ; better, I am sure, than can commonly be found."

A ghost of a smile appeared upon poor Bess's face, pale and drenched with tears.

"All went well for a whole week, and on the very next day Hodge, the shoemaker in the village, was to take a load of turnips to Exeter, and I was to meet him on the road, and he was to give me a lift. But then I got a message from some poor people in the next parish, and I had to go to them. I went in the day, and in the night the people assembled at the house of a Catholic farmer, and I baptized several children, and heard confessions and said mass at midnight. All was over, and the people were departing quietly before daybreak, when some of the King's people passing by suspected something, and entered the house. I barely had time to flee, carrying my fiddle, as that was necessary to my disguise ; but they captured my cassock and some other things. It was a dark night, fortunately, and as I escaped through a back lane, although the whole pack were after me, I managed to give them the slip. I thought the safest thing to do was to return to Egremont, that being likely the last place they would look for me, — Sir Hugo being very active in hunting down Catholics."

"Was that villain there?" cried Bess. "May God punish him!"

"You shall hear. I walked and ran the rest of the night, and just as the sun was rising I found myself in the Egremont woods. Oh, how sweet they were! There was so much dew on the grass that it looked like rime,

If a Man Giveth His Life

and so many primroses ; but I will not say another word about Egremont. Although my beard disguised me well, I thought it best not to stop in our village, but went on further, several miles, to another one. I got my breakfast at the inn, and then asked for work in the fields, which was given me. At noon, when we had dinner, — the poor men and women dividing theirs with me, — I tuned up my fiddle to play to them, when I saw, riding along the highroad, not a stone's throw from me, Hugo Stein. I thought he was in Germany, — I had heard so, — but it seems he returned unexpectedly only the day before. I was so disconcerted at the sudden sight of him that instead of playing 'Green Sleeves,' as I was about to, I found myself playing 'Les Folies en Espagne,' which is much played on the continent, but not known here. Sir Hugo stopped his horse, looked at me very hard, then leaping his horse over the hedge he rode at me, saying, —

“‘ You are a popish priest in disguise. I know you, Richard Egremont !’

“I laughed, and went on with my fiddling, although at that very moment I knew that I was to die on the gibbet. He then seized me by the collar, saying, —

“‘ Come with me. I shall hand you over to the magistrates.’

“I knew all was over then, and putting my fiddle under my arm, I walked along by his side as he again took the road toward Egremont. And to show you, Bess, how hard it is to forgive one's enemies, and the enemies of those one loves, I could not but think, ‘Oh, had I but a good horse, and sword or pistol in my hand, would I not make you payment for the wrongs you have heaped on us, miserable bastard that you are !’ And in truth, Bess, although I hope I shall have grace given me to—

The House of Egremont

morrow morning to forgive Sir Hugo, I have it not yet."

"I should think not!" replied Bess, with much simplicity.

"I followed him to Egremont, for Sir Hugo is very active in enforcing the laws against poachers and papists, — he classes them together, — and often detains suspected persons at Egremont until they can be put in Whitford gaol. He took me into the house, — oh, Bess, I thought I could be calm and cool under all things, but when I saw the rooms where I had played when a boy, and thought of Roger, I could scarcely forbear weeping.

"Sir Hugo took me into the little book-room, off the gallery library, the very place I wished to go, as I knew of the 'priests' hole;' but he said to me, smiling, 'I know what you are looking for. It is closed up. The present owner of Egremont obeys the laws of the realm, and harbors no man against the law.' I spoke no word, except, looking hard at the place in the wall where it had been, I said, without reflection, 'God's will be done.' He kept me there until the next day, — the last night I was ever to spend under the roof of Egremont, — and the next day, my cassock and other things being found, the country was in an uproar, the Whigs demanding my blood, and others who would have been more merciful were afraid to speak, for fear of being thought implicated in last year's hanging business. It was considered best, however, to remove me to London nine days ago, as some of the poor people at Egremont were muttering very much, and threatening to attack the Whitford gaol. So I was brought here and resented on Monday, before the Court of the King's Bench, to be hanged, cut down while I was yet alive, and quartered. I was, however, spared that part of the sentence of Sir John

If a Man Giveth His Life

Friend and Sir William Perkins, whose heads and quarters were ordered nailed to Temple Bar."

A deathlike paleness overspread Bess's usually ruddy face. She was physically so strong, and in her buffet with the world she had acquired so much self-possession that her own agitation actually frightened her. She sat white and silent, and trembling in every limb. Not so Dicky, who was as calm as if the morning's sun were not the last he was to see. "Now, Bess Lukens," he said in a cheerful voice, meant to compose her, "listen to what I say, for I charge you with my farewells. I have nothing to give any one but my blessing. First, make my duty to my King, the Queen, and the Prince of Wales, and tell them I die their loyal and dutiful subject, as becomes an Egremont. Tell my superiors that I trust in God for grace to die in a manner befitting the Society of Jesus, and I thank them for having sent me here. As for Roger, say to him that I ever loved him best of anybody in the world, and that when I remember my boyhood, friendless but for him, and recall that I never learned from him or saw in him anything but the nicest honor, I cannot express the gratitude that fills my heart. It did my heart good to see how our poor people at Egremont still had him in loving memory, and longed for him to come back. And for you, Bess, the best and truest of friends—"

For the first time Dicky's musical voice broke. Here was the actual farewell of the dying to the living. "You who have come to me when I expected to see no familiar face. Well, Bess, remember what I often said to you when you sang those sweet songs and anthems to my violin,—pray that we again sing them together in Paradise."

Bess rose. She had told him little or nothing of

The House of Egremont

what she had meant to say to him. She had not even told him about Madame de Beaumanoir and the money, but she felt herself unequal to more. Her strong body and her strong soul were alike giving way. As she went toward the door, like a sleep-walker, she heard Dicky's clear, sweet voice calling after her, —

“Good-bye, dear friend; God bless thee forever and ever!”

His manacled hands were uplifted in blessing, his round, boyish face had a new and glorified expression, his eyes were glowing with faith and courage, — Dicky Egremont had grown to the full stature of a man, nay, of a hero.

By sunrise next morning the distance from Newgate prison to Tyburn was crowded with people, mostly on foot, but many on horseback, others in carts and chaises, and some even in coaches. The executions usually took place in the prison, but the execution of a young Jesuit of good family was too interesting an occasion for the citizens of London to be deprived of the full sight, — public executions being public holidays in London town. The drawing and quartering were likely to be highly interesting, and these Jesuit gentlemen had a reputation ever since the time of Queen Elizabeth of dying with much propriety.

It was a hazy July morning, the blue mist lying low along the river front, and a pallid sun shining dimly out of a gray sky. The green spaces in Hyde Park were full of a tumultuous crowd, laughing, talking, eating, and all tending toward Tyburn. Some wished to secure the best places so as to see the tortures to be inflicted on the young gentleman; others were willing to forego that in order to watch the bearing of the condemned on his tedious way in the cart from Newgate to Tyburn.

If a Man Giveth His Life

Among those earliest on the ground at Tyburn was Bess Lukens. She was attired altogether in black, and her tall and handsome figure and her striking beauty were intensified by her sombre dress. Her clear complexion was pale; and her face, although full of keen sorrow, was calm. All that was most earthly in her beauty was refined away, and her bearing was perfectly quiet, dignified, and lofty. By her side stood Diggory Hutchinson, in his holiday clothes. He was by no means so composed as Bess Lukens, but looked about him anxiously, and seemed nervous, though not irresolute. The multitude about the scaffold speedily recognized the fact that the tall, pale, handsome young woman, in her black gown and hood, was one near to the condemned. The crowd looked at her curiously and not unsympathetically; nor did they press upon her, so that she stood in a little ring of people, as it were, with Diggory close behind her. She bore the scrutiny of many eyes without flinching, and, indeed, was unconscious of it. Whispers began to be circulated about her as the crowds were increased by thousands, who began to pour, like a mighty river, from all quarters of the town into the Tyburn district. Some said, "She is his sister;" others, "She was in love with him;" and others again, "She tried to rescue him;" but Bess remained calm and unnoticing. At last one man, more callous and curious than the most, came up to her and said:—

"You seem to be mightily consarned, miss. Maybe you knowed the condemned."

"I know him well," replied Bess, in her clear, penetrating voice.

"Is it true," asked the man, emboldened by her reply, "that he is of a high family?"

"As true as the Gospels," replied Bess. "It takes

The House of Egremont

men born and bred like Mr. Richard Egremont to come back here to England, when he thinks it is his duty, although the gallows beckons to him. Common people like you and me a'n't equal to it."

At this a laugh went around, much to poor Bess's discomfiture, who looked about with sad and anxious eyes, wondering what she had said to provoke a laugh.

The man, a respectable-looking tradesman, nettled by her words, replied tartly:—

"Look a-here, mistress. If you are so monstrous fond of this here traitor and Jesuit as is about to get his deserts, maybe you are in the same boat with him; maybe you'd be better off in prison than free!"

"If you think I can be frightened you don't know me," replied Bess, still composed. "I am not afraid to say that I am a friend to Mr. Richard Egremont; as true a gentleman and as loyal an Englishman as ever stepped; only, they won't let him practise his religion here. And there's a plenty of people here as feels sorry for him, and knows he a'n't deserving of his fate. But you are all cowards, and afraid you'll be taken up if you speak your minds, and so you keep as still as mice. But I am not afraid."

At that Diggory said to Bess, in a low voice,—

"For God's sake, Bess, hold thy tongue, or we may both find ourselves in gaol!"

"Why?" asked Bess, quietly. "I'm a freeborn Briton. I can speak my mind, can't I, if I say no evil of the powers? And I tell you, Diggory Hutchinson, that nothing on earth can make me say anything but the truth when I am asked about Mr. Richard Egremont!"

Then there was a faint and distant roar,—the sound of many voices. The victim was approaching; and that

If a Man Giveth His Life

menacing shout, ever growing nearer and louder, was a cry for blood.

The man who had questioned Bess then began again :

“ But I say, mistress — ”

“ Hold your tongue ! ” cried a woman near to him. “ Have you no heart in your body, man, that you can keep tormenting this poor soul as is in trouble enough, God knows ? ”

The man slunk off at this, and the people near Bess kept a respectful silence.

The roar swelled deeper and louder and nearer, as the streets leading from the Newgate quarter became black with approaching people. The howl for blood echoed to the heavens and again to the earth beneath ; and when it seemed to fill the universe, the crowd parted, showing the cart, and in it Dicky Egremont and one of his gaolers.

Bess Lukens’s keen eyes sought Dicky’s face, thinking it would be strange and glorified, as she had seen it the night before ; but instead he looked exactly the same pleasant-faced, boyish Dicky she had seen playing the fiddle in Madame Michot’s garden, singing Jacobite songs and laughing with her and Roger at St. Germain. His face had its usual ruddy hue ; his few days of confinement had not robbed him of either flesh or color. He was seen to be pleasantly conversing with his companion, Ketch, who sat on the bench beside him. He wore his cassock and beretta ; his hands were tied together behind him.

As he came into full view, something like a groan and shudder went around among a part of the crowd, — he was so young, so fresh-colored, so full of life. He turned around, and his eyes fell upon the gallows and all the other gruesome preparations for his death, but

The House of Egremont

he did not show so much as by the flicker of an eyelash the least fear or shrinking.

The cart was now driven up close, the sheriff's men closed around it, and the gaoler, getting out himself, prepared to aid the prisoner to descend. But Dicky, always agile, jumped lightly out of the cart, hampered as he was.

The crowd pressed closer about the roped-off space, and among them was Bess Lukens. As she caught Dicky's eyes, he gave her a glance of recognition, but forbore to speak or bow, or in any way indicate that he knew her. But poor Bess cried out loudly, —

"God bless and help thee, Mr. Egremont!"

"I trust He will," answered Dicky, simply.

The people who frequented executions liked to have their excitement spun out, and the best part of the show was to them the last words of the condemned. No officers of the law would have dared to balk a London mob of the pleasure of hearing a victim in his own defence; and so, when a ribald voice shouted out, "Come now, Master Jesuit, tell us how you come to be here," an instant hush fell upon the assembled multitudes.

"My friends," said Dicky, — his voice ever the sweetest and clearest, with something in it of the freshness of the larks and blackbirds at Egremont, — "I came here because it was my duty. I will not say how I came."

At this, the woman who had rebuked Bess's tormentor suddenly burst into tears and interrupted him by crying out, —

"It was a shame to send thee here, poor boy."

"I was not sent," said Dicky; "it was by favor that I came. Every Englishman in the Society of Jesus

If a Man Giveth His Life

wished to come in my place. This is our native country, and we love her, although she persecutes us. And I call God to witness, and you, His creatures, to believe that I die joyfully for my King, James Stuart, and for my religion. I was offered my life if I would abjure both, but no true man can barter his honor and his conscience for his life. I ask those of you who have mercy in your hearts to pray of God that I be delivered of my sins, and also, as no man of the Society of Jesus who has fallen under the executioner's hand has died other than as a man and a Jesuit should die, so pray that an Egremont be not the first to do otherwise. For although at this hour I am about to face the great God before whom gentle and simple are alike, yet I would not die unworthy of my ancestors. And if it be a sin to think of such things at such a time, I humbly ask pardon of God for that, along with my other offences. I pardon all those who have brought me to this, as I hope to be pardoned, and I thank God that after much tribulation His grace has enabled me to say that from my heart."

As Dicky finished speaking, there was a silence, a silence that was like that of the grave, among all those vast multitudes of people who filled the open space, choked the streets, and made the roofs and windows black with humanity. And in the midst of it the hangman, dressed in red, appeared upon the scaffold so strangely and quickly that he seemed like a spectre. As soon as Dicky saw this scarlet-clad and masked figure, he walked steadily up the rickety steps of the gallows and turned to have his hands untied. This the hangman did, and then went through the usual form of asking pardon of the condemned.

"I pardon thee freely, my friend," replied Dicky,

The House of Egremont

"and give thee the only thing I have left which will be of service to thee."

He took from the pocket of his rusty cassock a fine silk handkerchief, which he handed the hangman, at the same time saying a word to him in a whisper.

The hangman then removed the cassock, and Dicky took off the beretta which had covered his fair hair. The hangman rolled the cassock and beretta into a bundle, and then threw them carelessly behind him. They fell almost at the feet of Diggory Hutchinson, who quickly seized the parcel, and hid it under his cloak without being seen.

Dicky then stood in his black breeches and stockings and his white shirt, the graceful lines of his young figure silhouetted against the morning sky. The delicacy of his hands and feet, his girlish red and white complexion, were singularly striking.

He had no crucifix, but he clasped his hands and prayed silently for the space of a minute. Then, raising his head, he looked about him, smiling. The sun, which had been shining hazily, now suddenly blazed out in splendor, and all the earth was bathed in the golden glory.

As Dicky's intrepid eyes lighted upon Bess Lukens, standing pressed against the rope, she cried out in her musical, high-pitched voice, —

"God bless thee!" to which Dicky called back, "God bless thee!"

Then, making the sign of the cross, he turned to the hangman.

There was a breathless silence. A few women sobbed and shrieked, and a few men, racked with emotions strange to them, swore furiously, having no other mode of expression. They saw the young figure drawn up;

If a Man Giveth His Life

there were a few convulsive movements, and all was still.

The crowd, mostly bloodthirsty, began to yell, "Cut him down! Cut the Jesuit down! He'll be dead before he is quartered!" The hangman was long in doing this, but presently Dicky Egremont lay upon the ground livid and panting; no groan escaped him.

The executioner then produced his instrument,—a butcher's knife sharpened like a razor. He plunged it into the quivering young body before him. There was no cry, but a stifled exclamation, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit!" The butcher did his horrid work; the more bloody-minded in the multitude crowding about him to dip their handkerchiefs in the young Jesuit's blood, and to tear off strips from his gory clothing. But Dicky Egremont felt but one pang; the Lord Jesus had received his spirit.

CHAPTER XX

"HUGO STEIN IS MY ENEMY, AND I AM HIS, AS LONG
AS WE BOTH SHALL LIVE"

FOUR days after Dicky Egremont's execution there was a great stir in the village of Egremont at nightfall. A cart, with a long box in it, had halted on the edge of the one straggling street. At the head of the tired horse was a stolid-looking boy, and close by stood Bess Lukens. She wore her black gown and hood, and her pale face showed the stress of the dreadful emotions she had passed through and the travel from London by day and night.

It was yet broad daylight in the fragrant July evening. Afar off the many windows of Egremont glittered in the dying glow of the sun, and there was a still sweetness over all the land. Toil was no more for that day. Scarcely had the cart stopped when the village people began to collect about it, curious to know what the long box contained, and what business brought the strange, pale, handsome young woman to Egremont at that hour.

Among the first to arrive was Hodge the shoemaker. The windows of his cottage overlooked the spot.

"Good people," asked Bess, in a voice so weary that she scarcely knew it for her own, and looking about among the assembled villagers, "can you tell me if one Hodge, a shoemaker, lives nigh?"

“Hugo Stein is my Enemy”

“Here I be, mistress,” answered Hodge; “and yonder is my house, and my dame is within.”

“Then have I found the man I want. In this box is the body of Mr. Richard Egremont, executed in London last Thursday.”

A shudder and a murmur ran through the crowd. All of them had known Dicky as a bright-eyed, fair-haired lad, roaming about Egremont; many of them had seen him but three weeks before, and a few of them were among those he had given his life to serve.

Bess continued, the people hanging breathless upon her words: “I have brought his poor body — no matter how I came by it — here to rest, for I know he could never lie quiet anywhere but at Egremont. The bastard who sits yonder” — Bess pointed to the gables and chimneys and roofs of Egremont, shining in the purple light of evening — “the bastard, I say, would deny a true Egremont six feet by two of their own land, and so I come to ask of you a little piece of earth wherein to lay Mr. Richard until Mr. Roger comes to his own, and can lay Mr. Richard in the family vault.”

“I have a bit of land, freehold, mistress,” spoke up Hodge, quickly. “It cuts like a tooth into the park just at the Dark Pool, by the willow bank, a place both Mr. Roger and Mr. Dicky ever loved, and used to fish, when they were little lads.”

“Then,” said Bess, “will you look to it that a grave is prepared this night, and when you have seen to that, will you speak with me on a matter near my heart?”

“Truly I will, mistress,” replied Hodge. “Trouble yourself no more about these sad things. We have here laborers enough and more than enough to do all that Mr. Richard, poor lad, requires of any one now. So leave it

The House of Egremont

to me, and go you to my house, where my dame will take care of you."

"Before I go into your house," said Bess, with a wan smile, "I will tell you who it is you entertain so freely and kindly. I am Bess Lukens, — a plain woman, one of yourselves, though fortune has been better to me than to most. And I was befriended both by Mr. Roger Egremont and Mr. Richard Egremont, and that is why I brought Mr. Richard's poor body here."

Befriended! Ah, Bess, Roger and Richard told a different tale about that.

"Very well, Mistress Lukens. Go into my cottage while I see to the digging of the grave," replied Hodge.

Bess went into the cottage, where Dame Hodge received her civilly, and offered her a glass of cider, which she drank eagerly.

"For I am mortal tired," she said, her pale looks confirming her; "and I have had a heart like lead in my bosom these five days and nights."

In a few minutes Hodge reappeared. "It's all planned, mistress," he said. Although Bess had declared herself to be of the same class as the village people, all of them, including Hodge, saw there was a gulf between plain people like her and plain people like them. "The grave will be ready and the burial can take place at ten of the clock. And will you tell us about Mr. Richard?"

"Indeed I will," replied Bess, "but something else must come before that. Mr. Richard died forgiving his enemies, but I a'n't ready to forgive any of mine until I've dealt 'em one good blow anyhow. Now, as you know, the bastard yonder swore Mr. Richard's life away, and I want him to be brought to look on his work. Will you help me to do this?"

“Hugo Stein is my Enemy”

“Ay, that I will,” fiercely responded Hodge. “We know ’t was that villain who gave Mr. Richard up, and there’s more than one man in this parish who would give a month’s wages to pay off Sir Hugo Egremont, as he calls himself — the rascal!”

“Then,” said Bess, recovering her animation, “call you these men together, and tell them what I tell you. I mean to beguile Hugo Stein to Mr. Richard Egremont’s grave, and to keep him there the whole night through. ’T is a small enough punishment — I misdoubt that he will much trouble himself — but ’t is the best I can do, and at least I can put him in a mortal rage, and that is better than nothing!”

Bess was dealing with persons of her own class then, and her plan of vengeance, which seemed to her so natural and so just, appeared also natural and just to them.

“I can very easy get him there,” continued Bess with a meaning look. “All I have to do is to send him a message from a woman and pay the messenger to say I am young and handsome, and Sir Hugo will come; for never did I see a scoundrel who would not rise to any sort of a bait.”

Hodge grinned at the prospect.

“You are right there, mistress,” he said. “I can find you a messenger quick enough, and ’t will not be necessary to bribe him to say you are young and handsome. Sir Hugo is at Egremont to-night. I saw him riding home not an hour ago.”

Hodge went out, and presently came back with a sharp-eyed boy. Bess, who had passed the interval sitting wearily upon the settle, her head on her hand, lifted her eyes as Hodge brought the boy forward.

“My lad,” she said, giving him a shilling, “go you

The House of Egremont

to Egremont, and contrive to say to Sir Hugo that a lady wishes to see him at the willow bank by the Dark Pool at ten of the clock, and give him this handkerchief as a token." She handed the boy a fine handkerchief with lace on it. "If he asks my name, you don't know it."

"Nobody have called your name afore me," replied the lad, cunningly.

"And nobody will. If Sir Hugo asks what sort of a lady I am —"

"I'll say you are young and monstrous handsome," answered the boy, with a roguish smile.

"And now," said Bess to Hodge, the boy having departed, "what I wish you to do is this, — to tie Sir Hugo hand and foot, and to leave him lying all night on the ground by Mr. Richard's grave; not too close, for 't would dishonor the poor dead boy. Are you afraid to do this?"

"Not I," stoutly said Hodge, "and besides, I and the man that will do it can cover our faces so we'll not be known. There's scarce a man in this village who has not a grudge to pay back against Sir Hugo; he is a cruel landlord. And there are two men here, father and son, who have tilled the fields of Egremont since they were lads. There was a daughter, little more than a child, — you know such stories, mistress?"

"Alas, I have heard them often."

"Tis the old story. But these two men take it not patiently, and though they be quiet and say nothing, 't would not surprise me in the least if Sir Hugo were found some day on the roadside, with his brains beaten out by a stone, or a brick, or some such thing as every man finds to his hand when he wishes to be avenged on his enemy."

“Hugo Stein is my Enemy”

“Then do you bring those two men there; but first let us lay Mr. Richard to rest, and cover him with the soil of Egremont. Mr. Roger never sleeps but with a little bag of Egremont earth under his head. And when all is over, then shall that wretched man Sir Hugo be punished as far as God will let us punish him.”

A little before ten o'clock a small procession made its way slowly toward the Dark Pool, that place where Dicky as a little boy had spent so many sunny hours, sitting under the willows with his hook and line, not much caring whether he caught any of the silvery fish or not, but happy to be in so sweet a spot, — especially if Roger were sitting with him. The grave was ready, and after a short prayer by Hodge, who was a religious man, Dicky Egremont was laid to rest. The prayer of a poor and ignorant man was the only consecration of Dicky's grave except the memory of a good life.

When all was over, every one departed, except Bess Lukens. She appeared to be alone, but behind the willows, in the black shadows, lurked the three humble men who meant to pay off their debt against Hugo Stein, as well as they could in their own poor way.

The crescent moon arose, and shone upon the new-made mound, beside which Bess Lukens knelt, and made a prayer, weeping as she prayed. It came to her, though, that Dicky's sleep was sweet. Sharp as had been the agony through which he passed, it had been short, — and he could now no more suffer. This thought took tranquil possession of her soul, and soothed her. And then her fixed resolution to take such vengeance as she could on Hugo Stein seemed to her simple mind an act of justice such as inspired Judith when she slew the enemy of her people, and Jael when her woman's arm drove home the blow from which the sleeping

The House of Egremont

Shulamite never wakened. So far from feeling shame, Bess Lukens felt that solemn serenity which follows upon the determination to do well and instantly one's stern and hateful duty. Remember, she was but a gaoler's niece, was this Bess Lukens, — and she reasoned and acted as a woman of the people, — which she was.

Bess rose to her feet, and began to walk up and down in the shadows made by the willows. It was a warm July night, and so quiet that the only sound heard was the voice of the Dark Pool, as it murmured faintly under the moon and stars. There was a path, leading through a thicket by which Hugo must come, and Bess, in her walk, narrowly watched this path. Presently she heard a step not far away from her. It gave her a thrill, it was so like Roger Egremont's, for in some minor things the half-brothers were alike. The step came nearer, quite close to her, and stopped. Hugo Stein saw, in the high lights and deep shadows of a moonlight night, the graceful figure of a woman walking up and down. Her black hood was drawn over her face, so he could not distinguish her features, but he knew instinctively that she was young and handsome.

As he stopped, Bess advanced, and throwing back her hood looked so directly into his face, with her eyes sparkling brightly, that Sir Hugo was a little disconcerted. He stepped back involuntarily, and Bess came a step nearer to him.

Her beauty was so dazzling, her personality so vivid, that Hugo Stein was moved and thrilled. Her first words were startling, and highly disagreeable to hear, but startling and disagreeable words do not prevent a man like Hugo Stein from pursuing the acquaintance of a woman so handsome as Bess Lukens.

“Hugo Stein is my Enemy”

“There’s nothing for you to be afraid of,” she said, in her rich and ringing voice. “There’s nothing here except a woman and a dead man.”

Hugo Stein was not a man to be frightened by either a woman or a dead man. He was puzzled and interested to the last degree by the unknown beautiful woman, who showed at the first glance, to his practised eye, that she was not a gentlewoman, nor was she a common woman either. He replied promptly and gallantly, —

“Truly, there is much to fear from a woman so beautiful as yourself. Tell me, Miss Bright Eyes, who are you, and what can Sir Hugo Egremont do for you?”

“As for who I am, ’t is easy told; perhaps you may have heard of me. I am known as Mademoiselle Luccheni at Paris, — of the King’s Opera, — just as you are known as Sir Hugo Egremont of Egremont. But I am in truth plain Bess Lukens, just as you are plain Hugo Stein.”

Hugo Stein’s face changed, — no man or woman ever called him by his true name, except to do him a mischief.

“Yes,” he said coolly, but with malice in his eye. “I have heard of you, — the daughter, — or is it the niece? of a turnkey in Newgate.”

“True,” replied Bess, “but like you, I’ve had a rise in life. How pleased my uncle the turnkey, and your mother, the harlot, would be if they could see us now!”

“Miss Lukens,” said Hugo Stein after a pause, “you are a very impudent hussy, and I shall leave you.”

He turned upon his heel to go.

“Oh, no,” cried Bess, seizing his arm in her strong grasp. “Do you think I got you here to spend only

The House of Egremont

five minutes in pleasant conversation? Not at all. I want some hours of your company on this spot."

As she spoke, she made a signal, and before Hugo Stein knew what was happening to him, three masked men sprang from behind the hedge, seized and bound him hand and foot, and flung him down full length on the ground, a little way from Dicky's grave.

"Lie you there, Hugo Stein," cried Bess, standing over Hugo's prostrate body. "Lie you there this night through. In yonder new-made grave lies the lad you murdered. Some day will you be judged for it, and judged for robbing your brother of his name and his estate. But before that awful judgment comes, you shall have this one night on which you shall suffer. Shout now, if you like, — no one will hear you or heed you until to-morrow morning. Proclaim it, if you like, through the country of Devon, bawl it through all England, Bray it throughout Europe, — that you were bound hand and foot, and made to spend the night upon the bare ground, close to the grave of the innocent man you brought to the gallows. Would that you had been in his place! But not too close. I would not let them lay you too near the righteous dust of Richard Egremont, — 't would be to dishonor it. In the morning, some ploughman or dairymaid may perchance release you, — and then, go your way, Hugo Stein. But let me tell you one thing more, — something tells me you will not tarry long after this poor lad. Make you ready to leave this world, — for I feel it and I know it, that your soul will shortly be required of you."

Within a week Bess Lukens was back in Paris. She lost not a minute in leaving England, never, as she promised herself, to return to it. Her first duty was to

“Hugo Stein is my Enemy”

write a long and exact letter to Roger Egremont, detailing all the circumstances of Dicky's last days, as he had told them to her; and of her getting his body by the power of money and bringing it to Egremont to be buried. When it came to telling of her beguiling Hugo Stein to the grave, for the first time she hesitated. Should she tell him that, or should she not? She had an instinctive feeling that a gentlewoman would not have done it; the particular gentlewoman she had in mind was the Princess Michelle. She in no wise repented of it, and would have done it all over again without the least hesitation; but — but —

Her native honesty triumphed, and she wrote Roger every detail, describing Hugo Stein's writhing and cursing on the ground, and gnashing his teeth, and calling her vile names as she walked away and left him; but something like shame made her add,—

“Think not hard of me, Roger, for this; remember, after all, I am but Bess Lukens, no gentlewoman, but come of plain working stock, and I am not like a gentlewoman, and I know it; so judge me not by what a gentlewoman would have done.”

She took the letter to St. Germain's, where the sad news of Dicky's fate was known. She went to the château and handed her letter to the King's secretary, that it might be forwarded to Roger Egremont. To her amazement, and her deep gratification, she was received almost as a heroine. The King and Queen sent for her, and when Bess, in her simple, but dramatic way, told her tale, she suddenly found herself moving her listeners as she had never done on the stage; and when, at last, her strong self-control gave way, and she burst into a passion of tears in describing Dicky's last moments, no one who heard her was dry-eyed. Bess

The House of Egremont

As Bess said "Princess of Orlamunde" Michelle colored slightly, but she responded in her usual sweet and composed voice, —

"I do not desire — and I think I have no more right — to be called by that title. I have left Orlamunde forever. I now wish to be called simply the Princess Michelle." She paused a little, and then continued: "I am living for the present at the house of the Scotch Benedictines. It is not far from here."

Bess listened in surprise. "Is your husband, then, dead?" she asked.

"Dead to me," replied Michelle; "dead and buried. But I did not come to trouble you with my affairs. I came to ask you some of the particulars of Father Egremont's execution. I understand you were with him the night before he suffered. I did not know Father Egremont very well, but — but — I took great interest in him — so young — so brave —"

Bess looked at Michelle, gravely considering her. She had left her husband — that was plain. And whence came this profound interest in a man she only slightly knew, as she admitted of Dicky Egremont? Why, Roger Egremont, of course.

"Perhaps it is on Mr. Roger Egremont's account," said Bess, coolly and not without malice. "I remember that he accompanied you upon your marriage journey. He is a man, once known, likely to be remembered."

Michelle's face turned scarlet, and her eyes flashed. She half rose from her chair. The insolence of this creature! Rightly was she served in coming there. The desire to hear and know something of Dicky's sad fate came truly, as Bess had broadly hinted, from that overmastering interest which Michelle had in everybody and everything that Roger Egremont loved. And there

“Hugo Stein is my Enemy”

had been some faint, wild hope that she could hear something of Roger from Bess. She had not heard one word, or had one line from him since that June evening at la Rivière, when she stood in the doorway of the little room on the bridge, and watched him as he sat by the open window, looking at her with strange, agonized, yet adoring eyes. And she had so longed to know something of him since! The idea that this humble protégée of Roger's, this Bess Lukens, should dare to question her, the Princess Michelle, had not dawned upon her at first, and now it was impertinent and altogether intolerable. Then suddenly the poignant recollection of a certain recent period in her life flashed over her. What right had she to be haughty to this woman, or to any other woman, after la Rivière? This thought made her sit down again, as pale as death. Perhaps Bess — the whole world — knew about la Rivière. She had fled from it, had done penance for it, and at the same time had used all the considerable wit with which God had endowed her to keep it secret; and this was more for the sake of the man she loved than for herself — and Michelle was the proudest of proud women.

Bess divined, rather than saw, the Princess Michelle's agitation, and did not feel sorry for her. The silence was prolonged, and neither woman spoke. Bess would not, Michelle could not.

At last Michelle, trembling and fearful, took refuge again in asking about Dicky Egremont, and Bess, having no reason to decline, told her of it briefly. But she could not tell it without being moved herself and moving others, and she softened when she saw tears dropping silently from Michelle's eyes upon her black mantle.

Bess told all, even the story of her carrying Dicky's

The House of Egremont

body to Egremont, and the punishment she devised for Hugo Stein. When she reached that part Michelle's eyes quickly grew bright and dry. She leaned forward, her hand upon the arm of her chair, the color mantling her pale cheeks when Bess described Hugo Stein's rage and anguish as he lay helpless and prone and cursing upon the ground.

"I punished him all I could, and I can say truly I have not lost one wink of sleep nor ate a morsel the less for it," concluded Bess, stoutly.

At these words, Michelle rose and grasped her by both hands.

"I thank you," she said. "I thank you for all you did to Hugo Stein. I thank any man or woman for punishing Hugo Stein. He has injured me in a way no woman could forgive, or should forgive, for he insulted all pure women in me. And he is my enemy and I am his as long as I live."

"I will cheerfully shake hands with you on that," cried Bess, and their mutual hatred of Hugo Stein brought them together for a moment, to draw violently apart the next minute because they both loved Roger Egremont. And it came about in this way.

The mention of Hugo Stein and the sharp remembrance of Roger could not put Dicky entirely out of Michelle's mind. She resumed her chair, and after sitting thoughtfully for a time, Bess meanwhile watching her, she said, —

"After all, I know not why we should pity Father Egremont. He died in his white-souled youth, and very gloriously. Of all deaths one should wish to die for one's duty, for one's country, one's king, and one's religion."

Bess looked at Michelle with a kind of horror. With

“Hugo Stein is my Enemy”

all Bess Lukens's large and liberal soul, she had very little idea of *noblesse oblige*. She would have died cheerfully for a person, but not for a cause. This was something not to be understood by her. Stout Protestant as she was, she was no candidate for martyrdom, and she regarded these notions of devotion to an abstract thing as an evidence of cold-heartedness. As she had never happened to see it except among the great, she rashly concluded that it was due to their insensibility. Especially was she prone to think so in this case, for between the Princess Michelle and Bess Lukens was that armed neutrality which must ever exist between two women who love the same man. Bess was ready enough to admit that she was no mate for Roger Egremont, or any gentleman of his caste, but she did not love the woman who was fitting to be his mate, and was prone to see evil in her. She looked at Michelle with bitterly reproachful eyes, and burst out with, —

“That is the way with you fine ladies. You don't care, not you, that the poor lad is gone; and let me tell you, the death that Dicky Egremont died is a very awful one. I never saw one before, though I was brought up in Newgate gaol, where my uncle was turnkey; and I can tell you, to see that innocent young man led forth, and that bloody butcher, the hangman, making ready with his great knife, and the cutting up alive —”

The recollection of these horrors so worked upon Bess that she bowed her face in her hands; but in a little while it came to her that she had betrayed the secret she was most anxious to conceal, — the secret of her origin, — and had betrayed it to the last person on earth she wished to know it. But this unfortunate admission on the part of this untrained woman of the people was matched instantly with one made by a princess bred in

The House of Egremont

courts, — such damage will women do themselves when playing with the edged tools of the emotions. Michelle said, in a voice which showed the deepest agitation, —

“Mr. Roger Egremont told me that you had been kind to him when he was in prison in England, but he did *not* tell me that you were the niece of his gaoler. You saw him, then, every day?”

“Every day for more than three years, madam,” replied Bess. Both women had risen then, and were facing each other, Bess crimson and defiant, Michelle pale and profoundly agitated. Some wild impulse, the insane desire to know all, forced her to continue asking questions which filled her soul with shame, but yet which she could not refrain from asking.

“You followed him to St. Germain, then?”

“I came to France, madam,” replied Bess, “because I felt I could never rise, but would rather sink lower in England, and because King James is my king, and not the Prince of Orange. I own to you, had I not known Mr. Roger Egremont was in France, I should hardly have come. And he has repaid me, a thousand times and more, what little I did for him in Newgate gaol.”

Michelle continued looking at Bess with a hostile and jealous gaze quite beyond her to control, and Bess returned the gaze with interest.

“And is it possible —” Michelle began, and then stopped.

Bess Lukens’s eyes were blazing by that time, and she seemed to grow taller every minute. No danger of her bursting into tears then, as she had done under Madame de Beaumanoir’s charge. She only said, in a voice moderate, but ringing with emotion, —

“No, it is not possible. I know what you would imply. And I tell you to ask Mr. Roger Egremont

“Hugo Stein is my Enemy”

to show you a certain scar he has upon his left temple, and then ask him what his opinion is of Bess Lukens.”

“You misunderstand me,” answered Michelle, gently. “I meant was it possible that Roger Egremont loved you? You are a very handsome woman, Bess Lukens, far handsomer than I, and you have gifts and graces besides. It would not surely be strange if, seeing you every day, and experiencing your kindness, Roger Egremont had loved you. It would be strange if he did not.”

“What passed between me and Mr. Roger Egremont concerns but us two; but know you, there is nothing that ever happened which could not be proclaimed aloud on the terrace at St. Germain's of a Sunday. Can you say as much?”

It was only a chance shot, but it went home. Michelle's slight figure wavered a little — she caught the back of her chair for support. She had known all the time she was at la Rivière, and every moment since she had left it, that this horror of discovery would be hers — but it was the first time it had made itself felt.

“Mr. Roger Egremont has been very — very kind to me,” she said, hurriedly. “You had the privilege of being kind to him, but he and the Duke of Berwick, at Orlamunde, where I was grossly insulted by Hugo Stein — so grossly you cannot imagine — they succored me.”

And then there was a pause. Michelle had not heard one word of Roger Egremont, except that he had seen this beautiful girl daily for three years, — a thing he had never breathed to her. She ardently desired to hear more, but she dared not ask. The pause continued, — a pause which Bess Lukens declined to break. Both

The House of Egremont

of them continued standing, and as Bess did not resume her chair, Michelle felt herself invited to go.

In going, however, she was once more the Princess. She might, remembering la Rivière, abase herself in soul below Bess Lukens; but when she walked in or out of a room, or said good-day or good-bye, she was the great lady. She made Bess a sweeping curtsey, saying, —

“Mistress Lukens, I thank you for receiving me, and for all you have told me, and for what you did to Hugo Stein; and if I said anything to wound you, I beg you will forgive me and believe I meant it not.”

“I will,” replied Bess; “I think we both be friends of Mr. Roger Egremont — perhaps too much the friends of that gentleman to be over friendly ourselves. But I bear you no ill-will, and trust you bear none to me.”

“Truly I do not,” replied Michelle, “but the very highest respect.”

She had then reached the middle of the room, where she made another deep curtsey, which Bess returned with a bow; and at the door Michelle made a third and last one, deeper and more courteous even than before, and then melted away into the shadows of the evening, that were creeping fast into the room.

Michelle returned to the dark and gloomy building of the Scotch Benedictine nuns. In their house, where she had spent so many happy hours, so many periods of thought and study, she had a little room, as bare as any nun’s cell among them. To it she had come directly upon her return from Pont-à-Mousson. Only once before had she left it, when at the King’s command she had gone to Marly to tell her sad story. She had met with kindness — Louis the Fourteenth was commonly chivalrous to women — and she had returned at ease in her mind respecting how she had performed her duty at Orla-

“Hugo Stein is my Enemy”

munde. Louis, in fact, had begun to think his two hundred thousand livres a year very ill laid out in buying the good-will and alliance of so poor a creature as Prince Karl of Orlamunde, and was rather glad to have an excuse for intermitting it. So far, no soul, except the mother superior at Pont-à-Mousson, and as Michelle surmised, the Duke of Berwick, knew anything of those sweet, those evil days at la Rivière. Not even Madame de Beaumanoir suspected it, and Michelle felt there was scarcely a chance that it could ever be known. But her conscience ever accused her, and the accusation brought with it that haunting fear of discovery. She felt she had harmed Roger Egremont without that, and if that were known, it would go near to ruin him.

She went to her little room, high up under the roof, when she returned from her interview with Bess Lukens. She felt shaken and agitated, and unequal even to seeing the gentle nuns. And shutting her door, she walked to the open window, through which she could see all Paris lying below her, — the lights showing here and there like golden sparks in the purple dusk, the river winding darkly among its quays, flowing, flowing softly through the busy town until it reached the fair country, flowing, flowing to St. Germain, to those sweet meadows where first she had seen Roger Egremont.

Her eye at this moment fell upon a letter lying on the floor at her feet. She picked it up with trembling fingers. Some presentiment of evil made her hold it in her hand, unread, for a long time before lighting her candle. It had a perfume she hated, — a strong, coarse perfume, used by the Countess Bertha. Nothing renews associations like perfumes, and that one, so pungent, so overpowering, brought back to her that Palace

The House of Egremont

of Little Ease, the palace of Monplaisir, with all its iniquities. At last she forced herself to look at the letter by the light of the flickering candle. Yes, she recognized Prince Karl's slovenly, illiterate handwriting in the superscription. She did not ask herself how it came to her; she felt sure the letter would tell her, as it did. It was brief. Prince Karl was as inexpert with the pen as Roger Egremont was expert.

"I wish you to return to me, — not that I care if I never see your scornful face again, but your absence will cost me two hundred thousand livres a year, which I cannot do without. Bernstein will be waiting for you with a travelling-chaise at the corner of the street at daylight on the morning after you receive this letter. If you do not return to Orlamunde with him, all the children of the French families at Orlamunde will die of a quick and mysterious disease. I have promised my protection to these French people, and so have quieted their fears; but if you refuse to come, or betray this letter, those children will die. You know I always keep promises of this sort. So come."

One afternoon in early October, the little inn near Orlamunde where Michelle had stopped two days before her marriage saw her again. There were no young girls robed in white to receive her; no ladies-in-waiting to attend her; no state coach to convey her to her husband. Only Bernstein, a bad man, but a great improvement on his master, was her escort. She was weary and unfit to travel farther; but not for that would Bernstein have stopped. The horses had given out, and a night's rest would be good for them. So the wife of the reigning Prince of Orlamunde, although of less account than four good post-horses, was suffered, for the sake of those four good post-horses, to have a few hours of rest

“Hugo Stein is my Enemy”

before again experiencing the joys of that noble palace of Monplaisir. It was still early when they arrived, and the red October light shone upon the russet country, the garden, now desolate, and the little wood in which Michelle had first confessed her love for Roger Egremont.

Yes, she knew the very spot; for there had her steps been drawn against her will. The trees were quite bare, and the dead, dank leaves lay all about her. There was the stone bench on which Roger had sat when she told him that she was going to be married the next day but one. He was a stalwart man, but she remembered that his strength had seemed to fail him somewhat, and he fell, rather than seated himself, on the bench. She sat down on it now from sheer weakness, and her lovely, miserable eyes looked at the scene she knew so well, — changed from spring to autumn, but not so changed as she, poor unfortunate.

She had never been strictly beautiful, and three weeks of travel toward Monplaisir had done its work. She looked haggard and pale beyond description; and her light and charming walk, as graceful as the swallow's flight, was no more. She moved slowly, because hopelessly, and, besides, she had no more strength left. The going back to Orlamunde was not the worst of what she was called upon to endure. Prince Karl and the Countess Bertha and the Marochetti woman — these were bad, but they were the least of Michelle's agonies. What would Roger Egremont think of her? It was that which had brought her to look like a ghost; it was that which had made sleep and food well-nigh impossible to her. He could not have a great opinion of her after la Rivière. Although she had of herself left that spot of all delight, she had remained long enough to ruin him

The House of Egremont

eternally if it were known that they had ever been there. There were not in the world many women more miserable than the Princess Michelle on that October afternoon.

Presently, as she sat with her eyes fixed on the ground, she heard a step on the dry leaves close to her. She started violently. The strange resemblance which Bess Lukens had divined between the step of Roger Egremont and his half-brother flashed through her. She raised her eyes and saw Hugo Stein standing before her.

He was, as usual, clean-shaven, handsomely dressed, and debonair. He bowed low to Michelle, and said, with his crafty smile, —

“I have the honor to bid your Highness welcome to Orlamunde once more. Prince Karl has been anxiously expecting your Highness. So has the Countess Bertha von Kohler. So have I, Sir Hugo Egremont, ever since my return from England.”

Michelle made no reply, either in words or in expression. Truly was she a great lady, for in the presence of her enemy she maintained without the least effort a calmness, a coolness, a composure that robbed that enemy of half his joy in insulting her. She looked at him without the smallest agitation. He might have been a stock or a stone for all the notice she took of him.

“Your Highness is probably surprised to see me at Orlamunde again, after my pointed invitation to leave, by the Duke of Berwick and my half-brother; and without wishing to wound your Highness, I must say Prince Karl did not back me up as he should considering how much money I had paid him for my master, King William, to say nothing of what I had lost to him at cards. However, I only went away that I might return again.

“Hugo Stein is my Enemy”

I went to England, and on the very day I arrived I had the satisfaction of denouncing an escaped felon and convict, Richard Egremont, some time of the order of the Jesuits. He was hanged, as he should have been. Then, on explaining my affairs to the Government, I was permitted to return to Orlamunde with more power, more money than before, to say nothing of money I brought with me; for, my dear lady, to be without money at Monplaisir is like standing before a soup-pot without a spoon. I arrived but a week ago. I had no trouble in explaining to his Highness that there had never really been anything between your Highness and me, and that what I said was simply meant to pay your Highness off as well as my half-brother. The Prince has kindly forgotten it all, and he has won over a thousand louis d'or from me since I came back. We have had a glorious week of play, of music, of intrigue, of champagne. The palace is just the same, except that the Countess Bertha has a rival in a couple of dancing dogs, given the Prince by Madame Marochetti. 'Tis thought they will go far toward restoring Madame Marochetti's empire.”

Still, no word, no sign from Michelle. Not the slightest tinge of color appeared upon her pale face, nor a flash of indignation in her dark eyes. Hugo Stein was more angry with her for her composure than for any one thing she had ever done in her life.

He had been standing before her, but he then seated himself upon the bench with her, in the very spot in which Roger had sat.

“I thought your Highness's running away with my half-brother a mistake, a great mistake. If you loved him, you could have kept him at Orlamunde, in peace and quiet. No one would have objected.”

The House of Egremont

What was this? Michelle, leaning back wearily, put up her hand as she yawned slightly. Hugo Stein stopped a full minute. There was no sound except the faint movement of the wind among the fallen leaves at their feet, and the call of a wood pigeon, lonely and mateless.

Then, however, the silence was broken. Down the highroad came galloping a motley crew, the dust from their horses' hoofs obscuring the October sun, their housings and trappings and clothes and swords shining bravely. They were singing and shouting as they rode, Prince Karl at their head, swaying back and forth as he urged his horse on, striking the poor beast with his sword in his drunken frenzy; for they were all very drunk, the Countess Bertha and Madame Marochetti among them. As Michelle recognized them her pale face grew paler, and she looked about her for a moment in despair, like a hunted creature seeking escape. Seeing this, Hugo Stein smiled.

"Yonder is his Highness, come to meet your Highness," he said. "He will be pleased at the attention I have shown you by being the first person to welcome you to Orlamunde."

The party on horseback stopped in front of the inn. Bernstein ran out of the door down the garden path, and helped the Prince to regain his balance as he tumbled off his horse. The whole party, shouting and singing, and headed by the Prince, whom Bernstein held up, came through the garden, along the path to the little wood where Michelle sat. None of the Prince's companions, men or women, were quite sober. The Countess Bertha was able to dance a little as she came along the path, but finding it hard to keep her equipoise, presently stopped. When at last the Prince had got

“Hugo Stein is my Enemy”

within a few feet of Michelle, he stopped and looked at her with an idiotic smile. His hat was on the back of his head, and he gesticulated with his naked sword.

“Not so devilish handsome after all,” he said. “Pale — distrait — longing perhaps for that villain of an Egremont.”

His eye fell upon Hugo Stein. Some connection between Roger Egremont and Hugo Stein, some confusion in their identities, some recollection of the words that Hugo Stein had spoken on that night Michelle had left Orlamunde, — came lumbering through his drunken brain. A sudden frenzy shone in his bloodshot eyes. “*You* here!” he cried to Hugo Stein. They had been drinking together all night and half the day; and Hugo Stein, following his life-long practice, had remained sober while he helped to make the others drunk. “*You* here! you scoundrel! You are my wife’s lover, — you said so!”

His maudlin voice rose to a shout. “You said so, and denied it the other day when you came back; but you were telling the truth at first! And my honor — my honor requires — Stand, I say!”

He made a lunge with his sword at Hugo Stein, who was smiling in his face. It was a blow that only a drunkard or a madman could have delivered. He was no swordsman at any time; and Hugo Stein was reckoned among the best swordsmen in Europe, — with the small sword, the back sword, the sabre, and the rapier. But that blow delivered at Hugo Stein, standing with his hand on his own sword, went home to his heart. He uttered no cry as the blade entered his breast, breaking off short, while the handle fell to the ground.

Bernstein shrieked and caught the Prince by both

The House of Egremont

arms, dragging him backward as he shouted: "My honor — my honor, I tell you, Bernstein —"

Hugo Stein pulled the broken blade from his breast; he knew where it had touched. He drew his own sword, and, with his heart's blood gushing out in a torrent, aimed one straight blow at the drunken creature, staggering and screaming in Bernstein's arms. Hugo Stein had never given a better blow than this, — the last one he was ever to deliver. It brought the Prince to his knees. Something in Prince Karl's face told Hugo Stein that his sword arm had not lost its cunning even in death, and that Prince Karl would shortly meet him at that rendezvous to which both were hastening. He uttered no word, — all his strength had been saved for that one blow, — but fell upon his back on the ground. No hand was outstretched to receive him as he fell; no hand staunched his life blood as it poured from his breast. He died as he had lived, — a villain, and friendless. And close by lay the Most High, Most Mighty, and Most Puissant Prince of Orlamunde, — neither high, nor mighty, nor puissant now; but only the wretched remnant of a wicked and abominable man, breathing out his last breath in crime and drunkenness. All of the people who had come with him fled, the women shrieking loudly. Bernstein alone held up the Prince's dying head. And kneeling on the ground was Michelle, — some overmastering impulse of womanly pity making her wipe the death-sweat from the Prince's brow, and helping to lay him a little easier, and to whisper to him, —

"I forgive you, and may God forgive you."

But she cast not so much as a look, much less a prayer, on Hugo Stein.

CHAPTER XXI

WHEREIN IS SET FORTH THE CONCLUSION OF A MAN
WHO ALWAYS FEARED GOD AND ALWAYS TOOK HIS
OWN PART

IN December, 1698, Roger Egremont's regiment was at Mézières, — then a gay little garrison town. So gay was it that Captain Egremont, being in mourning for his cousin, Father Egremont, lately deceased, and having other troubles upon his mind, preferred to be elsewhere. Therefore, through his friend, Lieutenant-General the Duke of Berwick, Roger succeeded in having himself ordered upon duty connected with the making of military maps in a remote part of the Vosges. This took him to the very kind of place he wished to be in, — a village in the heart of the mountains, where the people were simple and primitive to the last degree, and where, except Roger and the village priest, no one could read or write. Here, in the best room of a peasant's cottage, lived the head of the house of Egremont. He had a soldier for a servant, and a sergeant and half a dozen more soldiers to help him in his work. It was light enough work, — Roger Egremont often did not see his sergeant or the soldiers for days and even weeks at a time, — military affairs being very quiet. Europe was taking a breathing spell after ten consecutive campaigns, the loss of eight hundred thousand men killed and disabled, the desolation of vast tracts of country, and the making of multitudes of widows and orphans,

The House of Egremont

—and affairs stood very much where they were ten years before.

Those ten years, however, had made the greatest epoch in Roger Egremont's life, and he too wanted a breathing spell. Fate had dealt him many staggering blows during his thirty-two years of life; the two heaviest, however, were the loss of his dear little Dicky, and the loss of his honor, as he conceived it, by his breach of trust with regard to the woman he most loved and the man he most respected of any in the world. He had made a clean breast to Berwick, but in as few words as possible, — he loved not to dwell upon his own iniquity. And Berwick, without preaching, and without exacting that Roger should be forever crying *mea culpa*, had conveyed to him that his sin was pardonable. But Roger Egremont could not forgive himself; and he reasoned, truly enough, that if Michelle had been the woman Berwick loved, Berwick could not have forgiven any man, not even himself, for any jeopardy to her. Roger had called himself a miserable sinner, night and morning in his brief prayers, ever since he could remember, without considering himself a sinner at all; but now he judged himself with a just judgment, and saw that he had indeed been a very miserable sinner. And this gave him a different outlook upon humanity than he had ever before known. He had time and opportunity for introspection. The winter was unusually severe, and tremendous snows fell early in December, thus cutting off communication with the South for many weeks. Roger had, for company, a few books, given him by Berwick at parting, — a Thomas à Kempis, some military text-books, and a History of France. Berwick's reading was not in the way of poets and romancers, although Roger knew him to be a man

Conclusion

of the deepest and truest feeling, — he could not yet bring himself to speak of the young wife so lately torn from him. Roger's reading had always lain very much in the way of romance, and that wicked fellow Molière had been as much his companion as his old friend and fellow-countryman, Will Shakespeare, — and Pierre Ronsard had been closer to him than either. But he had none of these three worthies to keep him company in the Vosges. The library of the village priest consisted of eleven books, five of them volumes of sermons. Roger thought he had got well out of the good priest's eager offer of his books, by accepting a volume of Bossuet's sermons, — he remembered that Michelle had liked them. He read them at first as a man reads from sheer desperation, but soon became interested, and concluded that the Bishop of Meaux knew much more of the world, as well as of God and the human heart, than he, Roger Egremont, did. His days were passed in tramping over the mountains in the snow, getting such information as he was desired to get, and drawing maps. In the evening he had a huge fire made in his one poor room, where a single tallow candle served as a chandelier, and by it he read and studied. He should have gone to bed early every night, yet it was sometimes midnight before he stretched himself upon his hard pallet, wrapped in his military roquelaure, to keep out the piercing cold. In those solitary hours over his fire he reviewed his whole life, — all life, — and came to the conclusion that Michelle was right in almost those first words she ever spoke to him, — that work, pain, and death were the three great true things. He began to perceive dimly, though, that by the manner in which the soul meets work, pain, and death, must its happiness be decided. Dicky Egremont had known work and

The House of Egremont

death, and what the world calls pain, — but Roger doubted if Dicky had ever suffered a moment's real pain on his own account in all his short life.

As for himself, Roger perceived that work was a blessing and not a curse, and began to think that Fate had given him some good schooling. If ever he came into his own, he would know more of the wants of the humbler people than any Egremont who ever lived. For he had known what it was to want money, to wear a shabby coat, to ride a sorry horse, — all valuable experiences to a gentleman of Captain Roger Egremont's naturally haughty and somewhat reckless temper. But Michelle — ah, then he writhed in his chair before the fire, and had no more ease of mind. What of her? Not one word had he heard, not one line had he written her. He dared not; he knew not what to say. He longed that she should know that he had recovered his manhood, and came to the old château that June morning determined to go to Pont-à-Mousson that very day, only, womanlike, her conscience had waked first, and she had not spent the whole night fighting the right, but had straightway risen and taken the path of duty. It was only a little over six months since those days at la Rivière — it seemed at least a century off. And while Roger would be trying to drive off these thoughts of her, which tortured him, all at once the squalid place would become the little octagon room on the bridge at la Rivière, the icy wind howling overhead the sweet breezes of the springtime, the delicious odor of the asphodel and narcissus would fill the air, turning presently to the rich fragrance of the roses and the lilies; he would feel upon his face and neck the light and wandering touch of Michelle's soft hair, as on that last, last evening — and Roger Egremont, the veteran of

Conclusion

five campaigns in the Low Countries, would feel himself conquered and overborne by these poignant recollections, and would throw himself on his rude bed, and cover his face with his cloak, as if to shut out that vision of too great pain and sweetness. And he knew, by a kind of clairvoyance, that Michelle was thinking these same thoughts of him. He knew, without being told, that she was leading a life of piety and seclusion; he had not seen her daily, and had her mind and heart laid like an open book before his eyes for many weeks, without reading what was writ therein. He sometimes wondered if they would meet again, but of one thing he was as certain as he was that he was a living man, they would never meet unless Michelle were free. He no more desired it than she; they both knew by sharp experience that it was impossible — not to be thought of.

The winter was passing; it was now the middle of February, and a thaw set in. For the first time since Roger had come to that lonely mountain place, it was possible to hear from the outside world. One day he got his first letter for three months. It was from Berwick, and was brief.

“Go to Mézières at once, where you will find it arranged that you have leave indefinitely, and lose no time in coming to St. Germain. There is matter of importance for you here. I will not write the details, as I shall see you so soon. It is a time when you must advance the motto of your family — ‘Fear God, and take your own part.’ Farewell.”

Roger glanced at the date. It was early in the previous November.

He lost not a moment in making his few preparations to start, and had not an hour for speculation until

The House of Egremont

he found himself on the back of his good Merrylegs the third, pushing through the mountain passes on his way to Mézières. What individual good could come to him, Roger Egremont, that Berwick should send for him in such terms? None at all. It must be some public matter. His old enemy, William of Orange, was near his end, perhaps, — Roger devoutly hoped he was, — or there was a great uprising on foot in those isles so dear to him. He rather expected when he got to St. Germain's to find the *fleur de lys* of France floating over the old palace, instead of the royal standard of the Stuarts. Travelling was still difficult, guides were necessary, and he made but slow progress, even after leaving Mézières, until he reached the champagne country. Then Merrylegs was put to it to show what stuff he was made of. At every stage of the journey Roger inquired eagerly of the public news; there was none.

His hopes of a Jacobite rising grew fainter, and when he reached Paris they faded altogether. His unfortunate Majesty James the Second still inhabited the château of St. Germain's, with no prospect of leaving it. It was then and there only forced upon Roger Egremont that there must be some individual good-fortune waiting upon him at St. Germain's.

He stopped not an hour in Paris, but he lost an hour by making a *détour* so that he would pass by that large, gloomy house of the Scotch Benedictines, — a sad enough place, except for the high-walled garden at the south, on which he could see the tops of cedars and the branches of tall lilacs and guelder-roses, with some delicate promise of leaves upon them. He knew that Michelle loved that place; he knew that she was most likely to be there of any spot on earth. He walked his horse past the house, and along the south wall, and

Conclusion

searched it all to find some sign of the woman he loved, but saw none. He wondered, should Michelle be there, would she not feel his presence? He felt that if she walked over his grave he would know it.

On that wide, paved, gay road, enlivened with much company, between Paris and St. Germain, he had leisure to speculate on what good news was waiting him. It was good, but Berwick could not dispose of life or death, and unless Michelle were free —

It was dusk in the spring afternoon before the terrace and the old palace came in sight. Roger rode straight for the palace. As he clattered up to the old gateway, he saw a cavalcade before him. Poor King James, old and feeble, still rode gallantly to hounds three times a week, scorning the calash in which his brother of France would have driven him. He had just returned from one of his hunting parties. Berwick was with him. The Queen and the little Prince of Wales and the little Princess, "La Consolatrice," were awaiting the King at the gateway. Roger Egremont, riding up, dismounted, and falling on his knee in the muddy street, kissed the hands of his unfortunate master, and then paid his respects to the Queen and her two fair children.

Berwick, who had dismounted to hold the King's stirrup, turned to Roger and embraced him.

"I had your letter just nine days ago," said Roger in Berwick's ear.

"Then you know nothing of what has happened?"

"Nothing."

"Mr. Egremont," said the King, "I wish to see you alone for a few moments," and walked ahead. Roger Egremont followed him up the well-known stair, along those familiar saloons, — ah, how they spoke of Michelle!

The House of Egremont

— into the royal closet. And the King, turning to him, said gently, —

“I wish to give you at once my reasons for wishing you to go to England and claim your estate, now that your half-brother is dead. I presume you have just arrived, although we have been expecting you any day for three months past.”

His half-brother dead. Roger felt a little unsteady on his legs for a moment.

“I — I — your Majesty — I did not know — I had not heard,” Roger stammered, and then hesitated, quivering all over with the suddenness of it.

“You did not know of Hugo Stein’s death? The Duke of Berwick will give you the particulars. You will understand, of course, that you are now the heir-at-law if your half-brother’s contention was right, — which no one believes, — that your father and Madame Stein were married. And if, as you have steadily maintained, your half-brother was a bastard, there is no one to dispute your claim, unless the Prince of Orange should. And I think there is little danger of that. He is an astute man, is my usurping son-in-law and nephew, and he dare not raise any further issue with the Egremonts. He has ceased forcing the oaths upon gentlemen certain to refuse them; so go you to England and claim your own, as soon as you like.”

“But, sir,” asked Roger, recovering himself a little, “can I do that, and still hold my allegiance to your Majesty and my Prince? For, be your Majesty assured that, though I love my estates as much as it lies in a man, I love my honor more, and will not take my own unless I can take it with a clean mind and an upright soul.”

A wan smile came over James Stuart’s wrinkled face. A poor broken king loves loyalty.

Conclusion

"Truly, Mr. Egremont, you speak as becomes a man. But know you, the greatest favor you can do me is to go over to England and maintain your estate and dignity. There is no more to be done for me. To that have I been forced to agree. But when the time comes that a blow must be struck for my son, every gentleman of condition who is on the spot to help him, is worth ten men elsewhere. So shall I give you à writing, saying you go to England at my command. Nobody will ever take *you* for a Whig."

"I trust not, sir," was Roger Egremont's answer; and being then excused, he backed out of the King's presence; but once outside, he ran as fast as his legs could carry him to catch Berwick, whom he saw through a window walking toward the terrace, in the misty light of a spring evening.

Berwick paused when he saw Roger coming. The terrace was quite deserted then, and the night was falling softly. There was still an opal sky in the west, and below them, in the meadows, the kine were going home with tinkling bells echoing sweetly over the quiet fields and vineyards.

"So you know the news about Egremont?" said Berwick, smiling.

"Yes," replied Roger, and spoke no more, as he walked along by Berwick's side. They were on the terrace then. A few persons were strolling about or sitting upon the benches at the parapet, but it was very quiet, with the strange stillness of twilight.

Roger heard Berwick's grave, musical voice, but he heeded it not. His body was at St. Germain's, but his heart was at Egremont. Echoing in his ears was the sound of the little river at the Dark Pool, the larks as they sang in the park in the morning and the nightin-

The House of Egremont

gales at evening, and the calling of the dun deer, one to another, in the green heart of the woods.

"You are dreaming, man!" cried Berwick; and Roger, coming out of a veritable dream, looked about him like a man newly awakened.

"And how did my half-brother die?—God forgive him," asked Roger; and suddenly a passionate sense of the wrongs the dead man had done him rushed over him.

"No," he almost shouted, his clear voice resounding through the evening stillness and startling the nesting birds in the trees, "surely God will never forgive Hugo Stein. And it maddens me to think he should have gone out of the world with my three debts to him unpaid. One was, for robbing me of my estate; another was, for murdering my cousin; and the third and worst was, for slandering an innocent lady."

Berwick said no word. Roger's dark face was flushed, and he breathed heavily, clenching and unclenching his fists as he walked.

They had now come to the great green semicircular alcove on the terrace. There was not a soul in that retired spot. Not even the great golden moon, rising behind the trees, lighted up that solitary place.

"Hugo Stein was killed in a drunken frenzy by the Prince of Orlamunde," said Berwick, quietly.

Roger stopped still as if the name of Orlamunde gave him a shock. Berwick continued in the same quiet voice, but he looked away from Roger as he spoke, and they both moved about a little.

"Yes, the Prince of Orlamunde, the poorest swordsman in Europe, killed Hugo Stein, a master in the art, by a single blow, such as one seldom sees in a lifetime. And the Prince paid for his skill with his life. Hugo

Conclusion

Stein, dying, ran him through the body. Hugo Stein was in no drunken frenzy. Though with a mortal wound, his hand was steady to deal one last blow to his enemy. Never were two villains better served."

Roger Egremont again stood still and walked on and stood still, like a man in a dream. Truly was he in a dream. He had but grasped the idea that Egremont was his once more, when he found — he found — Michelle was free! That was all; but it was enough to make him feel as a mortal does when first rapt into Paradise. He saw himself again at Egremont, and, vision bright and fair, Michelle was beside him. It was so dazzling, so bewildering, that he put his hand before his eyes as if to shield himself from the splendor of his dream.

Again he heard Berwick's voice.

"There were strange circumstances before the killing. The Prince could not do without the Princess's dowry, and finding she was in the house of the Scotch Benedictines, contrived a letter to her by Bernstein. In it he told her if she did not return to him, all the children in the French families at Orlamunde should die of a quick disease. He was quite capable of it. The Princess returned with Bernstein."

Something in Roger's face made Berwick continue rather quickly, —

"She got no farther than the little inn you remember, near Orlamunde. There Hugo Stein had the villany to meet her. He had been to England, had sworn away your cousin Richard Egremont's life, and returned to Orlamunde. He had enough money to lose at play, to win back the Prince's favor, and meant to give the Princess the pleasure of his company on her return — the scoundrel! Then, as he was heaping in-

The House of Egremont

sults upon her at the inn, up comes the Prince with his crew of miscreants, men and women, the Prince very drunk. And in some way — I know not how — there were words, and in ten minutes Hugo Stein and Prince Karl lay dead, each at the hand of the other.”

Berwick paused. He saw that Roger required time to take in all he was hearing. After a while Berwick went on.

“The Prince’s successor — Prince Heinrich — a very different and a very worthy man, was at Orlamunde. The matter was hushed up as far as possible, and the decencies observed. The first thing Prince Heinrich did was to clear the palace and the schloss of the disreputable gang which Prince Karl had established there, and he at once installed the Princess Michelle at the schloss. She remained there, receiving every attention at the hands of Prince Heinrich, until after the funeral. Then she returned to France in a manner becoming her rank and station. She went directly to the house of the Scotch Benedictines, and is there now in the strictest retirement.”

Yes, he knew it. He had known she would go there; he had even felt her presence there as he passed by the house.

The moon was high in the heavens now. Roger found himself alone on the terrace; he did not know when and how Berwick had left him. His footsteps took him down the steep hillside into the silent meadows along the river, black and silver in the moonlight, to the very spot where he had first seen Michelle. Yes, there it was that he had first known the melting softness of her black eyes, first heard the thrilling music of her voice. There she had told him that work, pain, death, lay before all; it was almost the first word she had spoken to him, and it

Conclusion

had made him to think and made him to feel. But work, pain, and death, with love at hand, these made up the sum of perfect life. Work was easy; pain could be endured with joy, — he remembered the thorn that pressed into his hand and hers at la Rivière; and death could be met with courage, if only love stood beside him, not only love for Michelle, but love for all of God's creatures and love of God's righteousness. This thought soothed the fever in his soul; he was in danger of losing himself totally in the intoxication and the vainglory which had begun to possess him. He looked up at the star-sown vault of heaven. The stars had never seemed to him cold, unseeing, distant. They had ever been to him near, watchful, and palpitating. Their silent voices, eloquent through all the æons of time, rebuked his pride and composed his joy. There would still be work, pain, and death, and also infinite joy, but from those silent stars he humbly learned how to meet them all.

The first note of time he realized was the chiming of midnight. He roused himself, as it were; he was then again on the terrace. The moon shone brightly upon the river, and it seemed to Roger Egremont as if that silver shining on the water made a radiant path of glory to the heavens. All vast, all bright, all joyous, all noble thoughts were his, and they humbled him, and cast him down upon his knees to ask God to forgive him past iniquities and to keep him from committing them again. And his spirit, coming down from those supernal heights, where the mere human soul cannot walk for long, was lost in simple human happiness and thankfulness.

Roger Egremont walked back to the old château. He had no place provided to sleep. It was no matter; he could have slept out-of-doors. He had spent many nights with the sky for a roof and the earth for a bed,

The House of Egremont

but they were generally very miserable nights ; this one happy one would be a change. The sentry, however, at the gateway, recognized him and passed him through, Roger giving him a crown ; when the soldier, after a little parley, let him pass. Roger went into the guard-room on the left, where other men were sleeping, and wrapping himself in his cloak, with a log of wood from the fireplace for a pillow, fell into the very sweetest sleep he had ever known in his life.

Next morning Berwick told him it was the King's wish that he should start at once for England.

"There is nothing to keep me," said Roger. "I desire to leave a message with you to the Princess Michelle, which I beg you will deliver this day. It is that I will not intrude myself upon her in any way during the year of her widowhood ; but one year from to-day I shall be wherever she is, and if she will see me on that day I shall esteem it the greatest happiness and privilege of my life."

"I will deliver it to the Princess this day," replied Berwick.

And then, like a douche of ice-cold water came the thought to Roger Egremont, — he must see Bess Lukens. Never had the thought of seeing her been so painful to him, for some inexplicable reason. But it was his duty, — tenfold his duty after her noble service to Dicky.

Roger was rather pleased to acquiesce in the King's wish that he should leave at once for England. He would make no stop but for a brief visit in Paris to his friend Bess Lukens, — so he told the King, — and secretly and basely hoped Bess would not be at home.

He rode to the tall old house, and found not only that Bess was absent for the day, but even the two old

Conclusion

Mazets. Roger felt a great load lifted from him. He scratched a few lines on a leaf torn from his note-book. In them he told Bess that in a year he should return, and meanwhile that she must write to him and tell him all that concerned her; and he was then and always her loving friend. He made time to ride by the house of the Scotch Benedictines, and even tried to persuade himself that he caught a glimpse, over the wall, of a graceful figure that he knew so well; and then, lifting his hat from his head as he passed the house, spurred on to take the road to Calais — to England — to Egremont.

On a Sunday morning in March, Roger Egremont found himself once more at the edge of the village of Egremont. The village people had known for some months of Hugo Stein's death, and with that sturdy belief in Roger's ultimate return which they had ever cherished, they were looking daily for him. And on that Sunday morning Hodge, the shoemaker, leaning over his gate, observed a traveller approaching; and seeing that it was Roger, the shoemaker set up a great shout, that brought the whole village into the street.

Yes, it was Roger! Changed, it is true, — a bronzed soldier, his complexion darkened, his face softened, for he was a softer-hearted and a softer-spoken man than he had been in the old days when he lived more with trees and grass and fish and birds and beasts than with men, — but still Roger, a true Egremont and no bastard. And he was on the ground then, shaking hands with the men, bowing, hat in hand, to the women, and pointing to his horse, crying, —

“Where is Diccon, who gave me Merrylegs? I owe him fifty pounds for that horse; and though the poor

The House of Egremont

beast is long since dead, I have ever since owned a horse named Merrylegs, in his honor."

Diccon came forward, grinning with delight, to shake hands with "the master."

"And I have heard of all you did for my cousin, Richard Egremont, — the noblest, sweetest soul, — and I thank every one of you who did him a service. For those who helped to lay him in the soil of Egremont, and especially for those who helped Bess Lukens to punish Hugo Stein for his share in that murder, you shall have my thanks and ten golden sovereigns. And to-night, for the first time since I saw you last, will I sleep without a bag of earth from Egremont under my head, for now I shall sleep at Egremont itself."

The Egremonts had always been famed for their power to charm the humble people, and no Egremont who ever lived had more this charm than Roger. He was not grossly familiar with them, but kindly with the men and gracefully respectful to the women. In the midst of the handshaking and bowing, Dame Hodge elbowed her way through the crowd.

"Master Roger," she cried, "thou didst take from me thy last breakfast at Egremont, and now thou shalt take thy first after thy return under my roof."

"Sure shall I, good dame," replied Roger, smiling. His eyes were sparkling, his face glowing, — he had grown ten years younger in half an hour.

And then, just as it had been seven years before, he sat and ate of Dame Hodge's homely fare, in full view of the delighted villagers and tenantry collected from all over the estate; and afterward, coming to the door as he had done on that June morning so long past, he lifted his tankard of ale, and asked the people to drink to the health of King James.

Conclusion

"For I have not come back to you a renegade, my friends, but loyal to my King. I swear to you our King, his Majesty James the Second, would not give one rood of English ground for all of France, and France is a very noble country, although the usurper who sits at Whitehall would have you think otherwise. So, any of you that wish may inform on me, — but here's to his Majesty, King James; God bless him!"

And as Roger drank solemnly his own toast, taking off his hat as he did it, the people huzzaed. King William was a heavy tax gatherer, and no man likes to pay taxes.

It was then near midday. Roger would have preferred to go alone to Egremont; he wished to dream, to think, to be in ecstasies at every step through that well-known and beloved place; but his humble friends would by no means permit it. A rude procession was formed of villagers, men, women, children, and dogs, and so they marched along, with Roger on Merrylegs at their head, until they reached the hall door. The great house was closed, and looked singularly forlorn; the spring sun glinted against the stone pile, and the brightness without made the silence and quietness within the more apparent. But no white marble palace by moonlight ever appeared half so beautiful to any one as Egremont did to Roger then.

When the motley procession appeared on the great lawn, a prim butler came out from a side door. He had been duly warned by the village people many times that Master Roger, a valorous man, who feared God, but who always took his own part, would come some day, and turn Sir Hugo out. Sir Hugo had been even more effectually disposed of, and here was that terrible Master Roger.

The House of Egremont

"Open the main door, and do you and every servant about the house come to me," said Roger.

The butler ran within, and in a minute the great doors were flung wide. The few servants left, caretakers only, were marshalled in the hall, the butler at their head.

"Each one of you is dismissed now and here with a month's wages," said Roger to them. "I have no fault to find with you, but no man who served Hugo Stein can serve me. When you are ready to depart, which must be within two days, come to me for your money, and let me not see your faces while you remain. My own good people from Egremont shall serve me until I can get other proper servants."

There was no ale or beer worth speaking of in the cellars, although much wine, Sir Hugo not much relishing English drinks; and so, to Roger's relief, he found himself obliged to invite all his friends to go to the village alehouse for the wherewithal to drink his health, and he was at last left alone at Egremont.

So keen were his emotions when the last huzzaing villager was out of sight and sound that he was quite overcome with weakness and weariness. He walked straight to his own little room, a room so small and inconvenient that Hugo Stein had scorned to improve it, and there, locking the door and throwing himself into a chair, he covered his face and felt on his cheeks those rare, scalding tears that are sometimes wrung from strong men. All of his unloved youth, the wrongs his father had committed against him, his long misery of imprisonment, his poverty and exile for so many years came over him, and the first hour he spent at Egremont was among the saddest of his whole life. The past is a ghost which cannot be laid, and when it is

Conclusion

driven out by a happy and living present, it yet waits and watches menacingly, to intrude itself and threaten. "Think not to forget me. I am a part of thee, and will be with thee as long as sense and memory inhabit thee."

Roger looked about him and saw Dicky's short, boyish figure flitting from room to room upstairs and down, indoors and out; heard Dicky's sweet young voice, as when they had been lads together there, heard the vibrant music of Dicky's violin in "*Les Folies en Espagne*." He rose and went out of the house, through the well remembered path to the Dark Pool. He stood bareheaded by the low mound where Dicky slept so peacefully. It was quite green, although the time was early spring, but it had been newly turfed. There was nothing to mark it. Roger sat down by it, and pulled up carefully some weeds that had grown amid the soft grass. Could Dicky have but lived to see that hour! The sun was shining upon it, the Dark Pool was not dark, but full of light. Work, pain, death, — these were no more for Dicky, but joy and peace and life. This thought soothed him. And then Nature, the mighty mother, sweetly spoke to him as she had done in all that place for so many years. He listened to the voice of the laughing, sobbing, merry, melancholy river; he renewed his friendship with the trees, the fields. Once more he claimed acquaintance with the flying and creeping things, and the dun deer came timidly forth and ate out of his hand.

And that night he slept sweetly, ah, so sweetly, under his own roof, an exile no more, and prayed and swore in the same breath that the King should one day sleep at his palace of Whitehall as happily as he, Roger Egremont, slept at Egremont.

Next morning he began his reign by pitching out of

The House of Egremont

the house and making a bonfire on the lawn of everything in the house savoring of Hugo Stein. The top of the pile was a handsome oil portrait of William of Orange. Roger drove his foot through the face before burning it.

He then sat himself down, and in his beautiful clerly handwriting, strange to all whom he addressed, he wrote a letter to every Tory gentleman he knew in the county, advising them of his return, by the advice and consent of his Majesty James the Second, and boldly announcing that, if asked to take the oaths, he should refuse, and stood ready to go to Newgate again if need were. There was little danger, however. A Tory parliament was giving King William ample employment just then. Especially did it concern itself with forcing upon him the restitution of estates and crown revenues which he had bestowed upon his favorites. And so perpetually troublesome had been the Egremonts that a convenient blindness on the part of the government toward Roger Egremont was the only policy to be pursued. When certain red-hot Whigs in the county informed some of the court people that Roger Egremont had inaugurated his new reign at Egremont by making a bonfire of the portrait of King William, given by that Prince himself to Sir Hugo, they were met by a strange indifference, — so much so that they felt no inclination to repeat other disloyal things which Roger Egremont said and did. The government shrewdly suspected that this Jacobite gentleman would not object to a persecution, and they wisely declined to oblige him.

On the contrary, an intimation from a high quarter was given him, that if he did not molest the Government, the Government would not molest him — only, he must not visit London, and his comings and goings

Conclusion

across the seas would be watched. To this, Roger made no objection. He had called his tenants about him, confirmed such arrangements as seemed necessary, and on the first quarter-day, and every quarter-day thereafter, the rents were paid him without cavil. Hugo Stein had left no will, so there was no one to dispute anything with Roger, unless it were King William — and that astute person had larger affairs on hand than the dispossession of one single Tory gentleman. Besides, the King was very weary and tired of life, and it seemed as if his earthly troubles would soon be overpast — and he cared less than nothing for sister-in-law Anne, or who and what she would find in England when he was gone. So, partly from policy, partly from lassitude and disgust, King William was minded to let bygones be bygones with Roger Egremont — which was better for both than another arrest, another state trial, and another raking up of the popular fury which had attended the trials of the Egremonts.

Roger Egremont settled himself down for a year of preparation for the greatest happiness in the world; he had no reason to doubt that Michelle was doing the same thing. And meanwhile there was happiness in finding himself once more master of Egremont. No man was ever less fitted for exile than Roger Egremont. His soul had struck deep roots in the soil, the air, the sky of his native country. He had always spoken French with an abominable English accent, and was proud rather than ashamed that no language sat well upon his tongue except his own. And he was now restored to that spot so dearly loved and longed for, and he had everything to hope. Even King William's declining health gave him great joy, for he knew that the Orange Prince was not to be dispossessed by any force

The House of Egremont

poor, feeble King James could bring to bear against him. Only the King of kings could get William of Orange out of England. But Roger had high hopes that God would soon remove the usurping King to Abraham's bosom, and would by no means admit that any better quarters in the next world than Abraham's bosom would be provided for him.

Roger Egremont was extremely well received in the county, not only by the Tory families, but by the Whigs as well. For was he not young — not yet three and thirty — and rich? For Hugh Stein had been a careful manager, and albeit he had made way with much ready money, such as the eight thousand pounds from the sale of the oak timber, yet he had not been able to alienate an acre of the land, and he had added several hundred acres to the estate. Many Whig fathers of handsome daughters thought it would be a righteous action to make a son-in-law even of so obstinate a Tory as Roger Egremont, and convert him. So thought many of the daughters, for Roger was a soldierly-looking man, much handsomer than he had been in his first youth, one who had seen hard campaigning, who was familiar with foreign courts and camps and cities, could sing charmingly when he chose, which was not often, and, better than ever, "could fight, could drink, and could be gallant to the ladies."

But however gallant he might be to the sex in general, no one could say that he singled out any fair one in particular. He did not frequent gay places, and went not near London. He wore black that year for Dicky, and had the poor lad's body laid in the family vault, with great honor. He had occasional short letters from Bess Lukens, and wrote her in reply long answers, telling her more than he told any one else of his daily life,

Conclusion

his happenings, his hopes, his dreams, and always winding up with saying that he would be at St. Germain the next March. This specific promise gave a strange discomfort to Bess Lukens; she knew not why, and did not care to speculate. He wrote to Berwick too, sending all the political news he could gather, and dwelling joyfully upon the fact that William of Orange was said to be failing fast, and made no secret of his hatred for the English people since they had forced him to send his Dutch guards home.

At Christmas there was much merry-making for the tenantry and poor people at Egremont, and Roger Egremont threw open his house for the first time since his return from France. Many very ardent Whig maidens were inclined to forgive Mr. Egremont his outrageous conduct to the present government, and all of the Tory young ladies thought him the charmingest fellow alive. To this flattering treatment Roger responded with the most delightful gallantry and impudence, but gave no sign of abandoning his bachelorhood. And the last of February he departed on a mysterious errand to France. King William was very ailing then, and the Tory gentlemen wished Mr. Egremont to delay his journey for a few days, in view of the supposed imminence of the King's death. This, however, Mr. Egremont declared he could not do, but he would return almost immediately, feeling it his duty to be in England, if possible, when William exchanged Whitehall for Abraham's bosom.

At noon, on the sixth day after leaving Egremont, he knocked at the door of the Scotch Benedictines in Paris. He had taken off his mourning, and wore a plain but handsome riding-dress of brown and silver.

In a moment or two he was walking, hat in hand, through the long corridors, his masculine footsteps re-

The House of Egremont

sounding strangely in that quiet place. And then he was shown into the garden. It was at the back of the great building, and fronted south, so that, although it was but March, there was something soft and balmy and even April-like about it.

In this sheltered garden spot the hyacinths and narcissus were freshly blooming, while a great bed of violets was darkly green, with the violet buds showing faintly against the polished leaves. The crocuses were peeping up shyly, those tender flowers, the harbingers of sunshine. All these things Roger Egremont felt rather than saw, for he had ever been open-eyed to the pictures which Nature unfolds, and attentive to her lightest whisper.

There was a long box-bordered walk through the garden, and at the end a little circular place enclosed with ancient box trees. In it was a stone bench set upon the mossy ground, green, like a carpet. This sweet spot was as secluded as if it were in the green heart of the woods at la Rivière. The sun shone radiantly, and standing full in the golden light of noon was Michelle. She still wore a black gown and a black hood, which showed off the milky whiteness of her skin and the dark beauty of her eyes. She was standing with one hand on the back of the stone bench as if to support herself; and when her eyes fell on Roger, she advanced a step and raised her arms, in a motion like a bird about to begin its flight.

How Roger got over that space between the flagged walk and the stone bench he never knew, — only, that he was holding her slender hands in his, that her eyes were downcast, and tears were falling upon her pale cheeks and making crystal drops upon her black gown. The first thought that came into Roger's mind was, that

Conclusion

Michelle was, in truth, beautiful, — far more so than he had ever dreamed, even in those times of strange flowering out of her beauty, such as on that ill-starred wedding morning. She was no longer in the first flush of her youth; she was not radiant in satin and blazing with jewels, but dressed, with a nun-like simplicity, in black; agitation had driven the color from her cheeks; but yet, but yet, for the first time since he had first seen her, in the meadows of St. Germain, Roger Egremont thought her absolutely beautiful.

Roger spoke a few incoherent words, and Michelle replied, she knew not what. Such a meeting as theirs, with the recollections of seven years behind them, with those weeks of rapture, mixed with anguish, at la Rivière, standing out, glowing with delight, and, alas! red with shame, — does not bring the soft, unthinking joy which comes to those who have not suffered greatly. Each read the heart of the other, and read there shame and sorrow for that one lapse from integrity; but with that remorse was a deep, deep thankfulness. They had escaped the actual wrong-doing, but each had the feeling of a person who has walked blindfold on the edge of a precipice; and one single step — it made Roger Egremont, strong man as he was, tremble at the thought of that one step which would have cast them both into the abyss. And as for Michelle, innocent woman that she was, she knew in her heart what Magdalen felt when she washed the feet of the Saviour with tears.

In a little while the habit of self-command asserted itself. They became outwardly calm, and sat down on the bench together, and began to examine each other with the tender furtiveness of lovers. Roger was transformed by happiness. He never had, and never could have, regular beauty; but he had, in great perfection,

The House of Egremont

that masculine comeliness which counts with women far more than beauty. He had lost that look of sadness which, in evil moments, changed to surliness. His eyes were bright and glancing, and he showed his white teeth often in a smile. He was not so sunburned as he had been in his campaigning days, and looked like a man with whom the world went well.

There was little to say of themselves after Roger had said, —

“This day a year ago I sent you word I would return on this day, and here I am.”

Michelle understood, and for the first time she felt and looked like a woman receiving her lover. She blushed deeply, the rich color transforming her, and her eyes fell before Roger's gaze. He went on calmly explaining to her the necessity for his immediate return. It was a Saturday. He would go direct to St. Germain's that night. The Sunday would suffice for such few preparations as were necessary, and for the preparation of letters from the powers at St. Germain's to their followers in England; and on the Monday morning —

Michelle knew what he meant, and her eloquent eyes assented so quickly that no words were necessary. And then Roger suddenly said, —

“One thing must I tell you. On that last morning at — at la Rivière, after battling with myself the whole night long, I had the will, through God's goodness, to take you to Pont-à-Mousson. But you had already gone; you did right first — you always will do it first.”

Michelle turned to him with an angel's smile.

“Do you think, Roger Egremont, that I could see you daily, and all day long, for thirty-seven days, and not be driven — yes, driven, by the undying soul of honor in you, to do the right thing, no matter how late?”

Conclusion

Both were deeply agitated.

Roger rose and walked about the sunny little enclosed space to recover himself. Michelle sat still, and presently each grew calm. Then Roger came back, and, seating himself, began to talk about Egremont, telling her of the place, and the changes he meant to make for her; and they were released from the strained and intense emotions which had overpowered them by Michelle's saying, with a smile, —

"I think you have told me all this about Egremont before."

And then they laughed, and for the first time felt as they had done before that time at la Rivière.

"I can tell you this one more thing about Egremont and your life there," said Roger, still smiling, but with a look in his eye which meant determination: "When Egremont and its master are yours, you will no longer be a princess. I have seen commoners married to women of rank who would not abate their titles, and I never envied those men. You will be Madam Roger Egremont, no more and no less."

"Truly," answered Michelle, "I would not have it any other way." She was faintly annoyed with Roger that he had not waited a little for her to make this gracious concession, which she fully meant to do, and she spoke with something of the princess in her voice. "I can no longer be the Princess d'Orantia, and that I should be the Princess of Orlamunde is not to be thought of. And I meant, had you given me time and occasion to tell you, that — that —"

"To be 'Madam Roger Egremont,'" said Roger, finishing the sentence for her, and regretting the mistake he had made, "is to be well enough named. Is that what you would say?"

The House of Egremont

"Yes," replied Michelle, softly.

"But," continued Roger, taking her hand, "you will ever be a princess to me."

At last it was time to go, — that is, the sisters were walking in the garden for their recreation. Roger, when he rose, took from his breast-pocket a little case, which he handed to Michelle. It was a miniature of himself which he had caused to be made for her. It was set round with fine pearls. While Michelle's eyes were fixed with delight upon the miniature, Roger said: "Those pearls are part of a string which belonged to my mother. I found them in Hugo Stein's strong-box at Egremont, and I wished that you should have something which had been my mother's." Then, with an elaborate air of making a clean breast of it, he took out a little brooch, small, but very beautiful, of brilliants.

"This," he said, "is for Bess Lukens. It too belonged to my mother, — and I thought, considering Bess Lukens's services to my family, it would be a recognition which the poor girl would value, if I gave her something which had an association, — a sentiment, a —"

Roger stopped short. His look and manner were as nearly awkward as a graceful man's could be, — but the expression of Michelle's eyes was a little disconcerting. He always appeared ridiculous in his own eyes whenever he spoke of one of those two women to the other.

"It is very pretty," was Michelle's reply. "And, as you say, she deserves something at your hands. Was it not noble of her to go to England when Father Egremont was imprisoned?"

Her words were warm, but there was that curious coldness in her eyes with which a woman praises a suspected rival.

Conclusion

"She is one of the finest creatures in the world," cried Roger, with great sincerity, — and Michelle agreed with him promptly, her lips smiling, but her eyes very cold and unmoved. She had ever paid Bess Lukens the compliment of being jealous of her.

Michelle led the way to a little garden door which let Roger out into the street without passing through the convent. Merrylegs was stamping outside. Something passed, — one hurried kiss, — which no eyes but those of Merrylegs saw, and Roger, flinging himself into the saddle, went clattering down the stony street. Michelle listened as long as she could distinguish the hoof beats, — and then, going back to the little sunny place with the stone bench, sat and dreamed for long over every word he had spoken, every look of his bold eyes, every tone of his voice, — and afterwards going into the chapel prayed fervently a long time.

Meanwhile Roger went straight to Papa Mazet's house; clearly his first duty, after seeing Michelle, was to go to see Bess Lukens. But all the way he was thinking to himself that it was a Saturday afternoon, and perhaps Bess had gone to St. Germain, as she often did, to spend the Sunday with Madame Michot; and if he did not go to Madame Michot's until the next afternoon, she might have left for Paris; and meanly and cravenly he hoped it would so fall out, — so mean and craven sometimes is even a brave and honorable man where women are concerned.

Bess Lukens had indeed gone to St. Germain. Roger went in, talked awhile kindly with the two old Mazets, and then struck out for St. Germain. He reached there at sunset, and, as in duty bound, reported straightway at the palace, — his duty jumped with his humor in this.

The House of Egremont

He was very warmly received, his letters read with avidity, and Berwick, who was at Marly, two miles off, was sent for. He was charmed to see Roger. The two men embraced, and Roger told the gladsome news of all the aches and pains which racked poor King William's body. And then, the King urging upon Roger the necessity of immediate return to England, Roger smiled and craved permission to remain, and be married early on the Monday morning to the Princess Michelle. To this, the King gave his joyful consent, and sending for the Queen told her the pleasant story, — and there were more congratulations. Berwick got orders to go to Marly by sunrise, with a letter from King James, asking the approval of his brother of France to the marriage, and Berwick was charged with making all things ready, and going with François Delaunay after Michelle, on the Sunday afternoon, — all of which Berwick swore on his honor should be done.

A man cannot without much hard work prepare in a single day to be married and go a journey. Therefore it is not strange that it was near five o'clock on the Sunday afternoon before Roger Egremont had a moment in which to go to the inn of Michot. He still harbored the craven wish that Bess might be gone to Paris by that time ; and, thinking this, he turned into the forest from the town, meaning to go that way to the inn, instead of by the terrace, crowded with people on Sunday.

He was walking through the forest, toward the sloping hillside at the end of the terrace, when suddenly, under the dappled shadows of the trees in which the buds were springing, he came face to face with Bess Lukens. She was, as usually, very richly dressed, and her velvet hat and feathers shading her glowing complexion and liquid, red-brown eyes, brought out the

Conclusion

deep tints of both, as well as the warm color of the little auburn curls that clustered about the nape of her white neck. A white satin mantle hung, with graceful abandon over one beautifully formed shoulder, while, with her other hand, she held up her train of purple silk. Never had Bess Lukens looked handsomer, and never had her brilliant coloring and splendid attire contrasted more strongly, in Roger's mind, with Michelle's chastened loveliness and nun-like black garb.

Bess's bright face lighted up radiantly at the sight of Roger Egremont, and then as suddenly paled. She remembered that he had said he would return in a year precisely, and it was just a year, and Michelle's year of widowhood had expired; all these thoughts rushed into Bess's mind while Roger was warmly greeting her, and wondering just how short a time he could decently spend with her.

"I have much to say to you, Bess," he said. "Let us turn off into this quiet path, where there is a bench."

"Yes," replied Bess, leading the way and seating herself. "I was sitting in this very place that night you passed me by near eight years ago, when I so frightened you by drawing my sword on you."

"How different all is now with both of us, — as different as the seasons. Then it was summer time and so shaded one could scarcely see the sun at noon-day. Now, there is scarce a leaf in sight, but spring is coming; it is coming fast; I feel it in my blood."

Then he asked her about herself. It was the same story, simply and straightforwardly told. Mamma Mazet was becoming childish in mind; Papa Mazet was failing fast, but both the old people were happy and satisfied, and wanted for nothing.

"And God is good enough to let me repay them for

The House of Egremont

all their kindness to me by being a little kind to them in their old age," she said.

"I can never repay you for your kindness to me and to my dear Dicky, but I can at least show you that I remember it," said Roger. "And if you will but come to Egremont—"

There was something in Roger Egremont's face and manner different from anything Bess had ever seen in him, and she knew him well. There was a joyousness and still a quietness, a gentleness and yet an exaltation. Looking at him, Bess could scarcely recall those first days in which she had known him, when he had made the corridors of Newgate ring with his oaths, his ribald songs, his drunkenness— Alas, let us say no more about it; he had atoned for it.

Presently, as they sat talking, Roger took from his breast a small packet, and taking from it the little brooch of brilliants handed it to Bess.

"This, Bess" he said, "belonged to my mother. I do not remember her, but I reverence everything that was hers. And so I brought you this from Egremont, asking you to wear it as a token of the gratitude of the Egremonts."

Bess's eyes filled with tears, although her wide, handsome mouth came open in a happy smile. This, indeed, was gratifying to her pride. Bess Lukens, the turnkey's niece, reckoned worthy to wear an ornament which had belonged to one of the ladies of Egremont! She kissed the brooch, pinned it proudly on her breast, and then turned her eyes full on Roger. And she saw in his countenance a painful constraint, a hesitation in meeting her eye; verily, the bravest man who walks the earth is a coward and a poltroon where there are two women in the case.

Conclusion

"And how long do you remain in France, Roger?" she said.

There was a pause before Roger spoke. A little wind bent the young boughs above them, and even this slight sound was heard in the perfect stillness. It was so long before Roger answered that Bess turned her beautiful face fuller toward him. He had a strange sense of being about to deal cruelly with her, a sense so poignant and painful that he was moved to be over with it quickly, and he said, —

"I am to be married to the Princess Michelle at seven o'clock to-morrow morning."

There was not a sound. Bess continued to look at him, the blood slowly leaving her face. That feeling of pity for her, and pain at the thought of her pain, made it impossible for Roger to meet her glance. He looked another way. The only sign of emotion she gave was her quickened breathing; it was as if she caught her breath in gasps. After five minutes, which seemed to Roger Egremont an hour, Bess spoke in a voice that slightly trembled.

"I can truly say, God bless thee and make thee forever happy."

Then there was another pause. After she had spoken, she became more agitated, and in her struggle to regain her composure she rose to her feet and walked toward the château. Roger rose too, and that piercing feeling of pity for her made him keep by her side. Without a word they passed through the forest glades, and when they came to the edge of the woods they stopped. Bess's eyes sought Roger's with a troubled expression.

"Why have I brought you here?" she asked. "I forget." Then, recovering herself, she said in a calm voice, —

The House of Egremont

"I remember now. There are vespers at six o'clock in the chapel, and the King and Queen like to hear me sing with the congregation. The others sing softly when I begin. 'Tis there I am bound."

They went on in silence.

As they came within sight of the clock over the gateway of the old palace, Roger saw that it was six o'clock, and the sweet spring afternoon was closing in. He walked with Bess through the courtyard and to the chapel door. There was close by a stair, narrow, dark, and winding, which led to the organ loft. Already there was a whisper of music from the organ floating through the white arches of the chapel. At this door, where Bess and Roger stood alone in the waning light, she turned to him. It was dusky where he stood, and the outlines of her fair face were not perfectly clear to him, but her red-brown eyes shone with a lambent light, both bright and soft; their expression reminded him of something far away in time and distance, — the eyes of a partridge, caught and hurt in a trap at Egremont; he had in mercy killed the poor creature. He felt unnerved under that soft gaze, with its mute, involuntary reproach.

"Good-bye, Roger," she said, in a voice clear and soft, and very unlike her usual tones, which were ringing and rich with life and humor and courage. "When the vespers are over do not wait for me. I shall go through the park alone; I am not afraid. 'Tis our last meeting before you are married, perhaps our very last; so I say, God bless thee, — if a blessing is of any good from such an imperfect creature as Bess Lukens. We have lived the importantest part of our lives together. I was but the turnkey's niece, and you were an unlettered country gentleman when

Conclusion

we were first acquainted in Newgate gaol. Since then, both of us have had good fortune; yours is but beginning, I hope. But those we know in our dark time, and by whose side we live and fight and conquer and are sometimes overthrown, are always more to us than those we know in the pleasant primrose path. So I think you will no more forget me than I shall forget you."

"Truly," replied Roger; "if I forget you, Bess Lukens, may God forget me."

She went noiselessly up the stair, and her figure melted away in the darkness. Roger Egremont walked into the chapel and seated himself in a dark corner. All the church was dusk, except the altar, where two candles twinkled and the sanctuary lamp burned steadily and softly. A few persons came in quietly, the King leaning upon the arm of the Queen, who gently supported him to his armchair. The priest came out on the altar, and the golden voice of the organ was uplifted. Roger listened for the echo of those glorious tones of Bess Lukens's in the psalms, but he heard them not. The church was quite dark, but as the music swelled and died two little acolytes in white cassocks, and with faces like angels, came out and lighted all the candles on the altar, making a glory of light in the holy place. And then, with a mighty rush of melody from organ and voices, came the *Magnificat*. Bess's voice, more pure, more sweet, more thrilling than Roger Egremont had ever heard it, rose above the waves of music.

"My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God, my Saviour." He translated to himself the sonorous Latin hymn; it was as if Bess Lukens spoke it to him, instead of singing it with the other

The House of Egremont

voices in the choir and congregation. It breathed of hope, of gladness, of peace, of a willingness to suffer, of joy in doing rightly, of all that the human soul should feel which lives not for itself, but for something higher. No one need pity Bess Lukens, a woman so strong, so tender, so truly humble in heart, who, beginning with all the burdens that could drag a woman downward, had yet contrived to uplift herself, — soul, mind, heart, — and would go on, becoming better herself and making others better. So thought Roger Egremont when the music died away, the priest left the altar, every human being but himself went out of the church, and he remained to think reverently and tenderly of her who had been a friend when he most needed one, and whom he had once reckoned so far beneath him that he was ashamed to own that he knew her, and now he justly counted so far, so far above him!

Next morning, at sunrise, Roger Egremont and Michelle were married in the old chapel. There was but a handful of persons present; the King and Queen, as became the master and mistress of faithful servants, Berwick, the Duchess de Beaumanoir, and François, — not a dozen in all. When the benediction had been pronounced, and Roger Egremont and his wife walked out of the chapel, the sun was just blazing over the tree tops in the forest; the gorgeous pennons of the day were advancing over all the earth. A delicate silver haze lay over the low-lying meadows through which the river flowed mysteriously, sometimes showing itself, and then veiling itself in misty splendor. The shrill, sweet song of birds rang softly from those fair meadows; it was far away, and the echoes were faint, as if they came from elfland. One happy bird, cutting the blue



Conclusion

air with joyous wing, burst into a rapture of song,
and rose far, far, far into the eastern sky, until it
seemed to be singing at the very gates of the morning.
A wind from heaven blew over the green earth. It
was the spring.



Other Books by MOLLY ELLIOT SEAWELL

THE HISTORY *of the* LADY BETTY STAIR

Illustrated by THULE DE THULSTRUP
In an original binding similar to "The
Sprightly Romance of Marsac." 12mo. \$1.25



Instinct with an atmosphere of delicate feeling such as few historical romances possess. — *The Bookman*.

A romance in which the author takes her history with a light heart and weaves it into her text with seeming carelessness, but the last effect is one of truth and animation. The style is spirited, the tone of the book gently and truly romantic. — *New York Tribune*.

An altogether charming and artistically told story. — *The Outlook*.

A captivating and ennobling little romance is "The History of the Lady Betty Stair." Dainty illustrations by Thulstrup add to the attractiveness of the book. — *The Congregationalist*.

A story of true love beautifully set in a century-old environment. — *Hartford Courant*.

Like an exquisite bit of old china is this delicately limned romance. — *Chicago Evening Post*.

It is not often that we come upon a love story so dainty, so artistic as "The History of the Lady Betty Stair." It is one of the sweetest, simplest love tales that has come to us for many a day. — *Brooklyn Eagle*.

CHARLES SCRIBNER'S SONS, *Publishers*

Other books by *MOLLY ELLIOT SEAWELL*

THE
Sprightly Romance of Marsac

Illustrated by *GUSTAV VERBEEK*

12mo. \$1.25

MARSAC is a real discovery of Miss Seawell's. His character is but hinted at in the epithet "sprightly," and the way in which the wit and good nature of this Bohemian



of the Latin Quarter triumph over adverse circumstances and land him and his friend Fontaine in affluence and bliss is set forth in a remarkably brisk narrative that recalls Mürger. The illustrations are numerous and as cleverly conceived and executed as the story.

One of the brightest and most sparkling stories of last year. — *Detroit Free Press*.

A particularly bright little tale. — *Philadelphia Times*.

Paul Jones
Richard Dale
Thomas Thurston
William Bainbridge
Edward Preble
Stephen Decatur
Richard Somers
Isaac Hull
Charles Stewart
Oliver Hazard Perry
Thomas McDonough
James Lawrence

Twelve Naval Captains

Being a record of certain Americans who made themselves immortal. With portraits. 12mo. \$1.25

A capital collection of yarns. . . . She tells the story of her heroes in an admirable tone of impartiality; she has a serviceable command of nautical language, and for anything smacking of the heroic a bright enthusiasm that is quite contagious. — *The Academy*.

CHARLES SCRIBNER'S SONS, *Publishers*

Em









